

Stendhal

on

love

translated by Sophie Lewis



ET REMOTISSIMA PROPE

‘on’

‘on’

Published by Hesperus Press Limited
4 Rickett Street, London SW6 1RU
www.hesperuspress.com

First published in French, 1822

First published by Hesperus Press Limited, 2009

Introduction and English language translation © Sophie Lewis, 2009
Foreword © A.C. Grayling, 2009

Designed and typeset by Fraser Muggeridge studio
Printed in Jordan by Al-Khayyam Printing Press

ISBN: 978-1-84391-609-3

All rights reserved. This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be resold, lent, hired out or otherwise circulated without the express prior consent of the publisher.

Contents

<i>Foreword by A.C. Grayling</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	xiii
On Love	I
<i>Notes</i>	113
<i>Biographical note</i>	117

Foreword

Stendhal's strangely engrossing *On Love* is not so much about love as such as about three other things: infatuation, women, and a slice of the history of a section of European society in transition. It is informed by a highly literate sensibility, and by a temperament which, though on the one hand both romantic and Romantic, has also a tincture of the dispassion of eighteenth-century science. Analysis of a quite serious psychological kind crosses the weft of anecdote, memory, whimsy, eulogy and aspiration that decorates almost every page. A book like this could only be written by someone who fancied himself deeply disappointed in love, though all the evidence both internally and externally is that its author, who was in love with love far more than he was in love with his Metilde, was by no means disappointed in *that* love. On the contrary: the subject of love absorbed and pleased Stendhal, as a topic of research pleases the scientist; all appearances of the vagrant wanderings of this book to one side, *On Love* is an essay that could only be written by a man who really desired to spend time with his subject.

Stendhal – Henri-Marie Beyle – is an attractive presence in his book. One thing that makes him so is the fact just mentioned, that he is a lover of love, or perhaps more accurately, a lover of the infatuation stage of love: its early, romantic, passionate stage of courtship and conquest, with its refusals and yieldings and its first transports of pleasure. The word 'lover' must here be understood in its constructive application: Stendhal is not a roué, voyeur, seducer, rapist, despoiler, cynic: far from it. He genuinely loves the idea of the romantic passion, the rosy effulgences of desire and the sighs and urgencies that inhabit the condition. To be a roué and seducer requires a certain indifference to the human, personal, psychological aspect of the one seduced, for the roué's plan is to abandon after use. This is not Stendhal. For, more importantly even than being

a lover of the idea of love, he is a lover of women, fascinated by them and observant of them, sympathetic and admiring, and all genuinely so, even if not always completely accurately so. But he sees that women are better at business than men, when given the chance; that they are excluded from theatres of activity that give the feeblest of men a right to a station above women who in fact are vastly their superiors. He sees and sympathises with their difficulties: they have more to lose in love, more risk of mockery and opprobrium if it overpowers them, less opportunity to distract themselves from it, fewer chances to check their jealousy or mitigate its corrosions when it occurs. Every disadvantage of their circumstances is as clear to him as the reasons why they are eminently worth vying for and dying for by men of true feeling.

Stendhal is in short a feminist, and when he has one of his alter-egos ('Salviati') say in the text, 'Indeed, half – the most beautiful half – of life is hidden from one who has not loved passionately,' the deep implication is that this is because encounter with the feminine in the special circumstances of courtship is valuable in itself, one of the life-enhancing experiences, and therefore a ripe topic for the kind of exploration Stendhal undertakes, even though the task of writing about love fully and coherently is difficult or perhaps in the end impossible.

Still, one should not fail to notice that Stendhal's tongue is firmly in his cheek at times. 'I cannot emphasise this enough,' he writes, 'the love of a man who is head over heels either *delights in* or *trembles* at all that he imagines, and there is nothing in nature that does not remind him of *her*. Moreover, delighting and trembling are deeply absorbing business and everything else pales in comparison.' Likewise, one should notice that his feminist sympathies do not prevent him from recognising – and condemning – the difficult, the proud and the false woman. Nor does he think that love, passion and erotic obsession are invariable goods; they can be painful and destructive, he knows that; he is not a fool. There is sharp perception everywhere in

On Love, and a kind of genius in the structureless structure of it, which allows all the contradictions and qualifications to be resolved – like an Hegelian synthesis – into a justification for celebrating love by devoting a book to following as many of its intricacies as possible.

What has so far been said touches on two of the book's emergent themes – infatuation and women – which are the foreground to its background, which is the post-war transition from eighteenth-century aristocratic life to nineteenth-century bourgeois life. Emphatically, the book's sensibility is a product of the former, and although the gentry and aristocracy of France and Italy did not go so far as 'good' society took itself in the Britain of the Victorian age, still they were both a lot less sure of themselves and a lot less louche than their forerunners in the era of the *ancien régime*. But change was enough on the way for Stendhal to devote a section of the book to dissecting (in none too commendatory fashion) female 'modesty', and to employ a trope of the time, the inefficacy of 'cold reason' against 'imagination's fire' in writing of female jealousy.

It is just at the moments of apparent off-handedness in his generalisations that some of Stendhal's more interesting observations fall. 'The difference between the meanings of un-faithfulness for the two sexes is so great that a woman in love may pardon an infidelity... Here is an authoritative rule for distinguishing truly passionate love from that founded on *'pique'*: for women, infidelity will practically destroy the one but will strengthen the other.'

The most famous idea in *On Love* is that of 'crystallisation', the beautification spread over and around the loved one by the act of loving her (or him) itself. The notion is taken from the tradition of the 'Salzburg bough'; lovers in that musical city would suspend twigs down the shafts of salt workings until they were covered in glittering crystals, then draw them up and present them to their chosen inamorata as a love-offering. Stendhal has the smitten one project a crystal disguise onto the

beloved's imperfections or ordinariness, making her (or him) seem to have dropped from heaven by a special dispensation. This is the essence of infatuation, indeed, and to the subtle workings of biology all thanks must be given for the continuation of the species even by the plainest of Jills and dullest of Jacks.

The kernel of this idea, as with that of love at first sight, owes something to an influence on Stendhal that he later acknowledged: to William Hazlitt, England's greatest essayist. Hazlitt and Stendhal became friends in Paris in the early 1820s and found much to share in their views about this great subject. That is unsurprising; the spark for some of what Stendhal thought about that matter was struck by his reading of Hazlitt's long essay in *The Edinburgh Review* for 1815 of Sigismondi's history of European literature. Stendhal's copy of the essay is annotated in the margins with observations and comments that found their way into *On Love*, in content if not in form. It is no coincidence that Hazlitt and Stendhal both wrote books on love – very different, to be sure; for where Stendhal's was urbane and speculative, Hazlitt's was painful and indeed ugly, a memoir of a helpless, humiliating and too quickly degrading infatuation with a much younger woman, whom he had crystallised so completely that he never saw her as she was – an ordinary enough pretty young woman who led him on a bit but never really gave him cause for the encouragement he gave himself over her. But the two books sprang from neighbouring roots; Hazlitt believed that love at first sight was a function of a prepared vision, a dream in the mind of a romantic who, when he saw something close to what he had imagined, was thereupon already in love, because long since in love with the dream. That is precisely what happened in the case of Hazlitt's tragic and destructive infatuation, and it is hard not to see the Salviati version of Stendhal as just one such lover of the idea of love, ready to fall and be tormented because that is his ready-made desire.

Stendhal and Hazlitt were tutored in youth by such inflammatory teachers as Rousseau and *Gil Blas*, even to the extent of Hazlitt echoing phrases from the latter in his own *Liber Amoris*. But the longer context for their respective views, and in particular their over-focus on the romantic beginnings of love, is the courtly troubadour tradition, and its resurgence in the warming-pan of poetry. Stendhal's romantic milieu is the opera box, the salon, the chaise bowling along the paths of an urban park. The semiology of flirtation has its role as an element in the transactions that constitute courtship and the 'dissembling eyes' of passion. There is little or nothing of mature or matured love, of the mountain-high passion that endures long separations and many vicissitudes, and finds its reward in itself because it has no other consummation. These are terrains of love – there are others – that are not seen from the summer-house of Stendhal's preoccupation. But his preoccupation is with that segment of the experience of love which most novels, most films, most plays and poems address: the passage of experience that is incomparably heightened, that is thrilling, desired, suffered, yearned for, and regretted when over; and therefore which is the one most natural to write about, if one must write about it – because one is not living it.

Chief among the traits for which Stendhal's novels are praised is their insight into character. No doubt his career in the Napoleonic administration, and his life in the army, were among the sources of this, but the experience and reflection that went into *On Love* play their part too. The book began life as a novel, but Stendhal soon realised that neither fiction nor the formality of a discursive treatise could even half do what can only be half done anyway; and so the aleatory, divagatory, wandering method of *On Love* formed itself by accident out of the way Stendhal wrote it – out of notes and anecdotes, observations and ventriloquised 'diary' entries and reminiscences. The result works; this is a gem of literature, one of many possible windows into the human soul, a book one must at some point

read and meditate upon, even if – in the larger scheme of things – it is more a comment by the way than the last and definitive word on its eternal subject.

– *A.C. Grayling, 2009*

Introduction

On 3rd June 1819, a young French gentleman arrived in the small town of Volterra in Tuscany. That day he sported a new suit of clothes, topped off with an unusual pair of green-tinted glasses. At around 6 p.m., he clearly felt the potential rudeness – and oddness – of addressing his landlord while still wearing his glasses, and removed them. Just then, Matilde Dembowski, the aristocratic young Italian wife of a Polish officer, happened to be passing. She recognised the Frenchman as one Henri-Marie Beyle, an acquaintance and witty patron of her salons in Milan – and the same man who earlier had passed the time of day with her, then still wearing his green glasses. She greeted him coolly this time and kept their conversation short. Beyle's romantic plan discreetly to follow and be near his beloved *Métilde*, as he called her, had misfired, disastrously.

How could this plan not misfire? Green glasses were hardly the most efficient or inconspicuous form of disguise and they would have to be removed at some point, as we have seen. Despite his spell in military service, his extensive travels in France, Germany, Italy and Russia, and his several experiences of love, Beyle was no master of either disguise or social grace. Nevertheless, he was an incorrigible fan of both. We know him better today as Stendhal, the pseudonym by which he was already, in 1819, signing his major works. This was one of around two hundred and fifty different, more or less transparent masks which he assumed throughout his public and private writing lives.

As for society, this is what had drawn Beyle to Milan in the first place. He first visited Italy in 1800, aged seventeen, and swiftly fell in love with his first Italian belle and with Italian opera, especially the glamorous social scene at La Scala. Although he returned to France many times, Beyle grumbled about the poverty of his country's art and social diversions, and

always longed to be back in Italy, which he felt was his true home. Milan meant two things to him: great art and passionate love.

Beyle met M tilde in March 1818. This was the beginning of the 'great musical theme' which was to dominate his life for the next three years. M tilde never gave him much encouragement, yet it may have been her very inaccessibility that allowed him to fall so desperately in love. Following the embarrassing incident at Volterra, she forbade Beyle to visit her for more than a couple of hours, once a fortnight. At this point, his love reached a new pitch of obsession. It also became increasingly clear that his adoration was not reciprocated and that his pursuit of M tilde was doing him no favours. This state of affairs limped on through 1820 and into 1821, when worsening Franco-Italian political relations intervened. Beyle was first suspected of spying for France and then, in 1821, of abetting the patriotic *carbonari* revolutionaries. Friends advised him to leave; perhaps he was also forced to acknowledge that M tilde would never love him.

De l'amour began with Beyle's abortive attempt to write *Le Roman de M tilde* – 'the story of M tilde'. He sat down to this task one day in early November 1819 and gave up that afternoon. He could not turn his love into a novel. Then on 29th December, he had the idea of using it as the basis for a philosophical essay, instead. A 'Day of Genius' – as he noted in English, in a margin: this was the true beginning of *On Love*.

Beyle scribbled everywhere. Starting with a concert programme (he spent most evenings at the opera), he continued jotting sections of his essay on playing cards (he would join card parties after the performance) and then on every scrap of paper that came his way. He later bound these scraps with wax, to compose his book. As Daniel Sangsue has remarked,¹ it is hardly accidental that this work, in which luck and improvisation play such important parts, should be associated from the start with role-playing and games of chance. Indeed, Beyle evokes the analogy of love as a lottery several times in *On Love*.

This method of composition also goes some way towards explaining the highly fragmented nature of Beyle's essay. While Balzac was greatly impressed by *On Love* and drew on it for his *Psychology of Marriage*, and Baudelaire took it sufficiently seriously to attempt a pastiche, other contemporary and later critics have found the book's disarray at best confusing or disconcerting, at worst a mess and a failure. Henry James thought it 'almost absolutely unreadable' (Sangsué, p. 13). However, another unorthodox philosopher of love might be more helpful here. In his *A Lover's Discourse*, Roland Barthes wrote 'the amorous subject has no system of sure signs at his disposal'² and 'to try to write love is to confront the *muck* of language...' (p. 99). Beyle was struggling valiantly with his medium. 'I constantly fear having written nothing but a sigh, when I believe I have set down a truth,' he says in his brief and moving ninth chapter. He also insists that love is too much of a whirlwind of emotions for its subject to retain accurate, articulable memories of his beloved. Moreover, he is adamant that writing itself is problematic: that the imagination, and therefore love too, is paralysed by the very act of writing, which enforces scientific analysis and freezes out feeling.

Had Beyle then set himself an impossible task? Not quite, for he found an original way around his problem. Barthes, writing on and in love, agreed with him: 'I cannot *write myself...*' (p. 98). So it seems that the writer of love must somehow write as both himself and not himself. Beyle was adept at juggling pseudonyms; already writing as Stendhal, among other names, he now had his best reason yet to introduce a few 'new' voices. Thus, 'M. de Stendhal's' 'friends' Lisio Visconti and Salviati are invented for the purpose of his book. The extracts from Salviati's journal are barely disguised sections of Beyle's own diaries. Delfante too voices Beyle's words and experiences, while his friend's beloved 'Léonore' is a thin veil for Métilde herself. The web of disguise extends throughout *On Love*: significant place names are routinely switched and substituted; at

one point in Salviati's journal its author even refers to himself in the third person, suggesting that this is *his* chosen pen name.

What is more, these revelations are not the result of years of dedicated scholarship and sleuthing. Just as few readers have ever been fooled by Beyle's use of the name Stendhal, so none of his contemporaries were required to believe that Beyle had had privileged access to these diaries for his book *On Love*. Beyle's excuses for occasionally slipping into the first person are threadbare and clearly intended to be seen through. The whole work is an exercise in pursuing a project suspended midway between the poles of intimate confession and philosophical dissection.

Thus Beyle was able to explore his own love story by embedding it in the frame of a philosophical essay and holding it at arm's length via his multiple narrators. He does his best to be 'dry' and programmatic, but admitted later that it still felt like 'roughly handling a wound that had hardly healed over'.³ The resulting text is a curious mixture of ordered classification, heartfelt though elliptical wisdom and rambling anecdote. Beyle's new concept of 'crystallisation' has been much admired, but the distinctive element of his whole approach is the insistence on the role of the imagination. This aligns him with British Romantic writers such as Shelley and Hazlitt, whom he admired, and puts him firmly in the camp of modernity. Yves Ansel finds the key to Beyle's modernity in his approach to love *as a product of culture* (Sangsue, p. 29). Love is something we want, something we can create through imagination and can also choose to nurture or to kill, however painful either may be.

This modern attitude comes through clearly in *On Love*. Nevertheless, the book's discontinuities and occasional contradictions are not solved, even by an understanding of its genesis and its author's conflicting impulses. It remains an uneven, puzzling, provocative book. So perhaps we should stop worrying about the order and disorder, the disguises and transparency of Beyle's text, and embrace instead his creation Stendhal, that voluble, charming companion, the witty ornament of numerous

Milanese and Parisian salons. If not a reliable manual for love, his essay *On Love* remains essentially a work of great wit and charm, a book to engage and argue with, to take seriously but never too seriously.

– Sophie Lewis, 2009

Notes

1. *Persuasions d'amour: nouvelles lectures de De l'amour de Stendhal*, ed. Daniel Sangsue (Droz, 1999)
2. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, tr. Richard Howard (Jonathan Cape, 1979) p. 214
3. Stendhal, *Memoirs of an Egotist*, trans. Andrew Brown (Hesperus Press, 2003) p. 91

Note on the text

This translation was made from the first volume of Victor del Litto's complete edition of *De l'amour*, published in the fully revised Folio Classique edition by Gallimard in 1980. I have not translated the three prefaces at one time or another preferred by Stendhal, nor his second volume and accompanying 'fragments', this first volume being deemed the heart of the book.

Acknowledgements

I am much indebted to Gilbert and Suzanne Sale's 1957 translation for Merlin Press, also to my hardy readers Harold Lewis and Pauline Le Goff. Thanks are due also to my sweetheart Peter and to my friends, who with any luck have successfully dodged my recent bad advice on love. Stendhal was partly responsible.

On Love

Chapter I

I am trying to understand this passion, all of the truest forms of which are characterised by beauty.

There are four different kinds of love:

1. Passionate love: that of Portuguese nuns, of Héloïse for Abelard, of the captain of Vésel, of the gendarme of Cento.

2. Mannered love, which flourished in Paris in the 1760s, and which we find in the memoirs and novels of that period, in Crébillon, Lauzun, Duclos, Marmontel, Chamfort, Mme d'Epinay, etc.

It is a canvas on which all must seem rosy, even the shaded parts; a scene into which nothing disagreeable may penetrate for any reason, for fear of showing poor breeding, tone, delicacy, etc. A well-born man knows in advance all the procedures he should follow and encounter in the various phases of this love; it often displays more refinement than true love, since nothing about it calls for passion or spontaneity, and it is always very witty. It is a chilly though charming miniature compared to a broad canvas by the Carraccis, and while passionate love sweeps us off against our best interests, mannered love can always accommodate them. If we strip the glamour from this poor kind of love, it's true that very little is left behind; once shorn of vanity, it becomes a feeble invalid, scarcely able to drag itself along.

3. Physical love.

Out hunting: what it is to surprise a young and beautiful peasant girl who flees into the forest. Everyone knows the love that these pleasures encourage, and however dried up or miserable you become, this is where you begin, aged sixteen.

4. Vain love.

The vast majority of men, especially in France, want and have a fashionable woman just as one keeps a pretty horse, as a thing necessary for a young man to live well. His vanity, more or less flattered, more or less aroused, leads to ardour.

Sometimes there is physical love, but not always; often there isn't even physical pleasure. The Duchess of Chaulnes used to say, 'A duchess is never older than thirty, to a bourgeois,' and frequenters of that just king Louis of Holland's court still recall with some hilarity a pretty woman from the Hague, who could never fail to be charmed by any man called 'duke' or 'prince'. However, loyal to the monarchic principle, as soon as a prince arrived at court, the duke was sent away: she was like a medal for the diplomatic corps.

The happiest instance of this insipid relationship is one in which physical pleasure is enhanced by habit. Memories, then, make it seem a little like love; there is the sting to your pride and the sadness when she leaves you; and with fantasies of romance catching you by the throat, you think yourself love-lorn and melancholy, for vanity aspires to be a great passion. The one certainty is that whichever kind of love gives us our pleasures, as soon as there is exaltation of the soul, it is vivid and its recollection stirring; and in this passion, unlike most of the others, the memory of what we have lost always seems superior to what we may hope for in the future.

Sometimes, with vain love, habit or despair of finding better leads to the least desirable of all kinds of friendship; partners pride themselves on their *steadfastness* etc.

Being part of human nature, physical pleasure is recognised by all, yet it only merits a low rank in the eyes of sensitive, passionate people. Thus, if they are mocked in the *salon*, if frequently made unhappy by the intrigues of more worldly types, these gentle souls turn instead to pleasures forever inaccessible to hearts that thrill only to the tunes of vanity or money.

Some virtuous and sensitive women have almost no idea of physical pleasures; they have rarely been exposed to them, if we can put it so, and even then the transports of passionate love often distract them completely from thoughts of bodily pleasures.

Some men are both victims and instruments of an infernal pride, an Alfierian pride.¹ These men, who may be cruel because, like Nero, they are constantly afraid, judging all by their own lights – these men I say cannot achieve physical pleasure without the greatest possible indulgence of pride, that is, only when they are able to inflict cruelties on their companion. Hence the horrors of *Justine*.² Only in this way can such men achieve a sense of security.

Besides, rather than distinguishing between four different kinds of love, we could very well allow eight or ten shades of love. There may be as many ways of feeling among men as there are ways of seeing, but differences of nomenclature change nothing of the reasoning that follows here. All the kinds of love we encounter on earth are born, live and die, or are raised up to immortality, according to the same rules.*

Chapter II **On the Birth of Love**

Here is what happens in the soul:

1. Admiration.
2. We think: what pleasure to give her kisses, to be kissed by her, etc!
3. Hope.

You study her perfections; at this point the woman ought to yield, for the greatest possible physical pleasure. Even the most reserved woman will blush to the whites of the eyes at this instant of hope. The passion is so strong, the pleasure so keen, that they show in striking ways.

* This book is freely translated from an Italian manuscript by M. Lisio Visconti, a most distinguished young man, who has just died in Volterra, his native town. The day of his unexpected death, he allowed the translator of his essay on love to publish it, if he could find a way of giving it some honest form. – Castel Fiorentino, 10th June 1819.³

4. Love is born.

To love is to take pleasure in seeing, touching, feeling with all the senses and being as close as possible to a lovable object who also loves you.

5. The first crystallisation begins.

If you are certain that a woman loves you, endowing her image with a thousand further perfections becomes your greatest pleasure, and you count up the elements of your happiness with infinite complacency. Ultimately you exaggerate her wonders until she can only have dropped down from heaven, out of the blue indeed, and destined just for you.

Leave a lover to ponder for twenty-four hours, and this is what will happen:

In the salt mines of Salzburg, a branch stripped bare by winter is thrown into the abandoned depths of a shaft; two or three months later it is retrieved, covered in sparkling crystals. Its smallest twigs, those no larger than a titmouse's paw, are spangled with an infinity of diamonds, dancing and dazzling; there's no recognising the old log it used to be.

What I am calling crystallisation is the working of the mind, as it draws from all around it new discoveries of the loved object's perfection.

A traveller describes the coolness of the orange-tree glades at Genoa, by the sea, during those scorching summer days: what pleasure to taste that coolness at *her* side!

A friend breaks his arm while out hunting: what sweetness to receive the ministrations of a woman he loves! To be with her always and constantly to see her loving you may almost turn pain into a blessing, and you start from the thought of your friend's broken arm, to end with no doubts remaining as to the angelic bounty of your mistress. In short, it is enough to think of a perfection and you will find it in your beloved.

This phenomenon – what I shall call this *crystallisation* – comes from nature, which orders us to search for pleasure and

sends the blood to our heads, feeling that pleasures increase with the perfections of the beloved object, and from the conviction that 'she is mine'. The savage has no time to go beyond the first step. He too feels pleasure, but he must concentrate on following that deer speeding into the forest, whose flesh must swiftly replenish his strength and keep him from his enemy's axe.

At civilisation's other extreme, I don't doubt that a loving woman will reach the same point, finding physical pleasure only with the man she loves.* It's the opposite of the savage. However, in civilised nations women have leisure, while the savage is so absorbed in the business of survival that he is obliged to treat his female like a beast of burden. If the females of most species are happier, this is due to the subsistence of the males being more assured.

But let us leave the forests and return to Paris. A man in love sees every perfection in his loved one; nevertheless he may be distracted, for the soul tires of all that is uniform, even perfect love.[†]

Here is what can happen to focus the attention:

6. Doubt is born.

Ten or twelve expressive glances, or some other series of actions which can take all of a moment or several days, first inspire and then confirm the lover's hopes. Then, recovered from his first astonishment and becoming accustomed to his happiness, or guided by homespun notions from the common mass of easily attached women, the lover demands ever more positive assurances in the further pursuit of his happiness.

* If this peculiarity does not arise in men, it is because they have no concerns of modesty, no fears of sacrificing it for a moment's pleasure.

† Which means that the same nuance of existence gives only a second of perfect happiness; but the *manner* of a man in love will change ten times a day.

He is met with indifference,* with coolness, even with anger if he shows too much assurance; in France, perhaps with an ironic tone that suggests, 'You believe yourself more advanced than you are.' A woman conducts herself in this way in case she should wake from a moment of intoxication and bow again to modesty, or if she fears an infringement of her modesty, or simply out of prudence or caprice.

The lover comes to doubt the happiness he has been counting on; he begins a harsh reassessment of all the apparently hopeful signs he thought he saw.

He thinks of falling back on the other pleasures of life; *these seem to have vanished*. Fear of terrible misfortune grips him, and with this, he applies his fullest concentration to his position.

7. Second crystallisation.

Now begins the second crystallisation, diamond clusters of which consist of confirmations of this single idea:

She loves me.

Every quarter of an hour through the night after doubt is born, following that moment of appalling unhappiness, the lover assures himself, 'Yes, she loves me,' and the crystallisation moves on to finding new charms. Then doubt's frantic eye fixes him again and stops him dead. He forgets to breathe, he falters, 'But does she love me?' In the midst of these harrowing and delicious alternatives, the poor lover feels keenly, 'She would give me pleasures that no other in the world can offer.'

It is the inevitability of this truth and it is the path towards it, bordered on one side by a terrifying precipice, and on the other

* What the seventeenth-century novels used to call *love at first sight*, which decides the destiny of the hero and his mistress, is a movement of the soul which, having been spoilt by an infinite number of scribblers, nonetheless does occur naturally. It comes from the impossibility of the following defensive manoeuvre. The woman in love derives too much happiness from her feelings to succeed in covering them up; bored of prudence, she neglects all precautions and abandons herself blindly to the joy of loving. Distrust renders love at first sight impossible.

by the promise of perfect happiness, that make the second crystallisation so superior to the first.

The lover swings helplessly between these three ideas:

1. She has every perfection;
2. She loves me;
3. What can I do to obtain from her the greatest possible proof of her love?

Still, the most heartrending moment in young love comes when the lover realises he has followed a false line of argument and must abandon an entire vision of crystallisation.

He may begin to doubt crystallisation itself.

Chapter III

On Hopes

A tiny measure of hope is enough to cause the birth of love.

Hope then runs short after two or three days, but love is nonetheless alive.

With a determined, reckless and impetuous character and an imagination schooled by life's troubles:

Hopes may be less ambitious;

They may cease earlier without cutting love short.

If the lover has been unhappy, if he has a loving and thoughtful character, if he despairs of other women or if he has a deep admiration for the lady in question, no ordinary pleasure can divert him from the second crystallisation. He prefers to dream of the most distant chances of pleasing his lady than to settle for the cheap attentions of some other vulgar, uncomplicated woman.

At this stage – and no later, take note – the woman you love can publicly show you sustained contempt, so that you will never be permitted to see her again.

Love may blossom even if the gaps between these stages are much longer.

Love demands a great deal more in the way of hope, and its long sustenance, from cold, phlegmatic or prudent people. It's the same with older lovers.

It's the second crystallisation, during which every second is a matter of being loved or wasting away, that ensures your love will last. After several months of this second-by-second, unending reaffirmation of your love, how could you bear the thought of ceasing to love? The stronger your character, the more solid will be your love.

This second crystallisation is almost entirely lacking if love is inspired by women who yield too quickly.

As soon as the crystallisations have occurred, especially the second one, which is by far the stronger, the old branch becomes unrecognisable to indifferent eyes,

For, 1. It is gilded with perfections, or diamonds, that they

* I have called this essay a volume of philosophical ideology. My aim has been to suggest that, although a work on love, this is not a novel, and above all that it is not as entertaining as a novel. I beg the philosophers' pardon for the use of the word ideology: my intention was certainly not to usurp a title to which others have a better right. If an ideology is a detailed description of ideas and of all the elements that they may consist of, then this book is a minute and detailed description of all the sentiments that make up the passion we call *love*. Following this, I draw out some consequences of this description, for example, how we can be cured of love. I don't know a Greek term for 'discourse on sentiments', as ideology indicates a discourse on ideas. I could have had one of my scholarly friends invent a word for me, but I am already rather put out at having had to adopt this new word *crystallisation*, and it is quite possible that if this essay does find readers, they will not let this new word pass. I must admit it calls for some literary talent to avoid the word; I have tried but without success. Without this word which, I believe, expresses the principal phenomenon of this madness we call love, *madness* which nevertheless brings man the greatest pleasures which it is given to creatures of his species to taste on earth, without using this word which we would otherwise have to replace with a long circumlocution, my description of what occurs in the mind and heart of the amorous man would become obscure, ponderous, boring, even for myself as author. What might it do for my poor readers?

I advise the reader inclined to be shocked by this word *crystallisation* to

cannot see;

2. Its gilding with perfections hardly appears special to them.

The perfection of certain of her charms mentioned to Del Rosso⁴ by a former friend of his darling, and a certain lively sparkle caught flashing from her eyes, are more diamonds of crystallisation* for his encrusted branch. These notions having arisen during an evening party, he dreams of them for the rest of the night.

A spontaneous exclamation that reveals a tender, generous, ardent, or, as we commonly say, *romantic*[†] soul, one that places the simple pleasure of walking alone with one's lover at midnight, in a secluded wood, above the happiness of kings – such an unguarded remark gives me likewise dreams enough to carry me through 'til dawn.[‡]

Del Rosso will say my mistress is a prude; and I that his is *easy*.

close his book. It is not among my desires – and this doubtless luckily for me – to have many readers. It would be delicious to find I give great pleasure to thirty or forty people in Paris whom I shall never meet, but whom I love to distraction without knowing them at all. For example, some young Mine Roland secretly reading some volume that she hides away in her father's work-bench drawers at the least noise, he being an engraver of watch-cases. A soul like that of Mme Roland will excuse me, I hope, not only the word *crystallisation*, used to express that act of madness which allows us to see all the beauties, all the kinds of perfection in the woman we are beginning to love, but many more daring ellipses than this. You have only to take a pencil and write in the five or six missing words between the lines.

† 'For me, all his actions bore that celestial air which instantly makes a man a being apart, picks him out from all the others. I thought I read in his eyes that thirst for a happiness yet more sublime, that unexpressed melancholy which aspires to something better than what we find here on earth, and which in all the places that luck and revolutions can send a romantic soul "Still prompts the celestial sight,/ For which we wish to live or dare to die."'
(Last letter from Bianca to her mother, Forli, 1817.)⁵

‡ In order to be *succinct* and so he may truly draw the soul's inner life, the author sometimes makes use of the pronoun 'T'. Hence he recounts numerous sensations which in fact are unfamiliar to him, since he had no tales of his own that would merit the telling.

Chapter IV

In a person untouched by love, such as a girl living in an isolated castle deep in the country, the tiniest surprise can grow into a delicate admiration. If then the slightest of hopes ensues, love will follow, and crystallisation.

In these conditions, love starts out as simple fun.

The surprise and hopes are powerfully supported by the need for love and the melancholy that you feel when you are sixteen. It is well known that the anxiety of that age is in fact a thirst for love, and this thirst is peculiarly unfussy about the nature of the refreshment that chance sends its way.

To recapitulate, the seven stages of love are:

1. Admiration.
2. What pleasure, etc.
3. Hope.
4. Love is born.
5. First crystallisation.
6. Doubts appear.
7. Second crystallisation.

A year may pass between no. 1 and no. 2.

A month between no. 2 and no. 3; if hope does not come through swiftly, we will almost imperceptibly give up no. 2, as it causes unhappiness.

The blink of an eye between no. 3 and no. 4.

There is no gap between no. 4 and no. 5. Only intimacy could possibly separate them.

Several days may pass between nos. 5 and 6, depending on the degree of impetuosity and the natural audacity of each person; and there is no interval between 6 and 7.

* When it comes to crime, a good education will teach a sense of remorse, the anticipation of which strengthens the case against a criminal action.

† Diane of Poitiers, in *The Princess of Cleves* by Mme de Lafayette (1678).

Chapter V

Man is not free to desist from that action which gives him more pleasure than any others.*

Love is like a fever. It flares up and dies away, and the will has no sway over it. Therefore you can only congratulate yourself on your *luck* in appreciating the fine qualities of the one you adore. This is one of the principal differences between mannered love and passionate love.

Lastly, love occurs at any age: witness the passion of Mme du Deffand for the graceless Horace Walpole. We may prefer to think of a more recent example, in Paris, with more attractive participants.

Only its embarrassing consequences are true proof of a grand passion. For example, timidity can prove the presence of love – and I do not mean the mere awkwardness of a new boy at college.

Chapter VI

The Branch in the Salzburg Mines

In love, crystallisation almost never stops. This is how it works: whenever you are not happy with your beloved, crystallisation occurs as an *imaginary solution*. Only through imagination can you be sure that such perfection is indeed possessed by the woman you love. Following intimacy, continually recurring fears are appeased by more real solutions. Thus no happiness is identical to another except in its source. Each day a new and unique flower blooms.

If your beloved lady yields to her passion and stumbles into the dreadful mistake of destroying the usual fears with the intensity of her emotion,† crystallisation will stop for a moment, but when love loses its intensity – which is to say, loses its fears – it acquires the new charm of absolute abandon, of unlimited trust. Then it

becomes a sweet routine that tempers life's troubles and lends its pleasures an entirely new interest.

If she leaves you, crystallisation begins again. Then the image of each happiness she used to give you, each impulse of admiration concludes with this crushing thought: 'Such sweet happiness – I'll *never* see it again! And its loss is my own doing!' If you then look for happiness in sensations of another sort, your heart refuses to feel them. Your imagination clearly draws diverting alternatives, setting you off hunting on a swift horse in the Devonshire woods;* yet you see, you *know* of course that you will not be pleasantly distracted by any of this. Such is the optical error that can lead to a deadly pistol shot.

Gambling also has its crystallisation, focused on the many delightful ways of using the sum you are going to win.

Old-fashioned court intrigues, so much missed by the Ultra-Royalist aristocrats, would not have been half as much fun without the crystallisation they provoked. Scarcely a single courtier was not dreaming of a sudden rise to fortune like that of Luynes or Lauzun, nor was there a good-looking lady who was not picturing herself at the head of a duchy as great as Mme de Polignac's. No rational system of government can restore that crystallisation. Nothing is more anti-imagination than the government of the United States of America. We have seen that their cousins the savages scarcely know of crystallisation. The Romans hardly had a clue about it, finding something like it only in physical love.

Hatred has its crystallisation: as soon as we see hopes of vengeance, we begin to hate once more.

If faiths that rely on an element of *absurdity* or of the *undemonstrable* tend to choose the oddest people for their leaders, this too is caused by *crystallisation*. There is even crystallisation in

* For, if you can picture that as happiness, crystallisation would have conferred upon your mistress the exclusive privilege of bestowing such happiness on you.

mathematics (see the Newtonians in 1740), in the minds of those who cannot remember every step in the demonstration that explains their beliefs.

For example, look at the fate of the great German philosophers, whose oft-proclaimed immortality never actually lasted more than thirty or forty years.

It is because we will never understand the *reason* for our feelings that the wisest men become obsessive lovers of music.

Regardless of our wish to prove we are right, it is impossible in the face of such flat contradiction.

Chapter VII

On the Different Origins of Love for the Two Sexes

Women select their partners by showing favours. Since nineteen out of twenty of their usual daydreams are to do with love, after intimacy these dreams cluster around a single object. Women then set about justifying such an extraordinary, decisive step, one so contrary to all habits of modesty. This process does not happen with men, but women's imaginations now savour their most delicious moments at leisure.

Love makes us doubt things that seemed quite clear before. Prior to intimacy, a woman may be quite sure that her lover is the most principled of men, yet as soon as she believes she can now refuse him nothing, she trembles for fear that all he wanted was to add one more lady to his list.

Only at this point can the second crystallisation occur, which, as it is spiced by fear, is a good deal more powerful than it would be otherwise.[†]

Believing herself a queen, at first, a woman thinks she has sold herself into slavery. This state of mind and soul is inflamed

[†] This second crystallisation does not occur with easy women, who have no interest in such romantic ideas.

by the nervous intoxication which arouses pleasures as deep as they are rare. In the end, a woman working away at her embroidery, a tedious, simply manual task, thinks only of her lover, while this gentleman, galloping across the plain with his squadron, would be arrested for the slightest lapse in attention.

I would say therefore that the second crystallisation is much stronger in women because their fears are more immediate: vanity and honour are compromised – at least, it is much harder to distract them.

A woman cannot be guided by that habit of rationality that I, a man, necessarily at my desk for six hours every day, am bound to develop while dealing with cold, rational things. Even in matters other than love, women tend to abandon themselves to their imagination and to a customary state of elation; their lovers' faults therefore vanish all the more swiftly.

Women prefer emotions to reason. It's quite simple: since, thanks to our humble customs, they are responsible for nothing in the household, *reason is of no use to them whatever*; they never find it good for anything.

On the contrary, for them it is *always harmful*, for it never appears except in order to scold them for having had pleasure yesterday, or to command them to have no more pleasure tomorrow.

Allow your wife to manage your business with two farmers of your land: I wager that she will keep the accounts far better than you – and then you, sad tyrant, will have the *right* at least to complain, since you haven't the talent to make yourself lovable. As soon as women undertake abstract reasoning, they fuel love without even noticing. When it comes to detail, they pride themselves on being stricter and more accurate than men. Half of all small business matters are run by women, who acquit themselves better than their husbands. It's a well-known maxim that if you talk business with women, your approach cannot be serious enough.

The point is that all women, everywhere, are greedy for emotion: look at the delights of a Scottish funeral.⁶

This was her favoured fairy realm, and
here she erected her aerial palaces.
Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor*

A girl of eighteen hasn't sufficient powers of crystallisation, and forms desires that are too limited by her brief experience of the things of life, to be in a position to love with as much passion as a woman of twenty-eight.

This evening I set this doctrine before a clever woman, who claimed the opposite:

'A girl's imagination not being chilled by any disagreeable experiences, and the fire of her youth being in full flame, she may dream up a ravishing image of any man she encounters. Every time she meets her lover, she will revel, not in the man he truly is, but in this gorgeous image that she has created.

'Later, disillusioned with this lover and with all men, the experience of sorry reality has reduced her powers of crystallisation, distrust has cropped her imagination's wings. Of no man at all, now, not even of a genius, can she form such a charming impression; she cannot therefore love with the same fire as in her first youth. And since in love we delight solely in the illusion we have spun, never shall the image that she can spin at the age of twenty-eight be as brilliant or as sublime as that on which she founded her first love at sixteen, and the second love will always seem second-best.'

'No, Madame, the presence of the mistrust which was not there at sixteen is of course what will give a new tone to the second love. In the first flush of youth, love is like an immense river drawing everything into its flow and irresistible to young people. Now, a sensitive woman understands herself at twenty-eight; she knows it is to love that she must turn if there is still to be happiness for her in life. A terrible struggle

between love and suspicion erupts in her poor agitated heart. Crystallisation progresses slowly, the soul's advances all made while the most awful danger remains in sight, but that which emerges victorious from this terrible trial is a thousand times more dazzling and more secure than any crystallisation at age sixteen, when youth's privileges are simply gaiety and happiness.

'This love will be less gay but more passionate.*

This conversation (Bologna, 9th March 1820), which contradicted a point I had thought so obvious, makes me think more and more that a man can hardly say anything sensible about what goes on in the depths of a sensitive woman's heart. It is a different story with easy women: we too have five senses and our vanity.

The difference between love's beginnings in the two sexes must be due to the nature of their differing expectations. The one attacks and the other defends; one asks and the other refuses; one is daring, the other very shy.

The man wonders, 'Can I please her? Will she love me?'

The woman, 'Is he not just teasing, when he says he loves me? Is he a reliable character? Can he really vouch that his sentiments will last?' Thus many women see and treat a young man of twenty-three like a child. If he has six campaigns under his belt, the situation is reversed – he is a young hero.

For the man, hope depends simply on the actions of his beloved; there is nothing easier to interpret. For women, expectations must be based on moral considerations that are extremely difficult to comprehend. The majority of men seek some proof of love that they can trust to overcome all doubts; women are not so lucky as to have such means of proof. Moreover, there is this misfortune in life: that what completes the security and happiness of one lover, represents danger and even humiliation to the other.

* Epicurus said that discernment is essential for the full possession of pleasure.

In love, men run the risk of secret torment of the soul, while women are exposed to the world's jibes; they are more reserved, and what's more, opinion tends to favour the women, for *sois considérée, il le faut.*[†]

Women cannot be sure of winning over public opinion by showing their true selves even for an instant.

Therefore women must be much less trusting. By virtue of their habits, all the intellectual processes that make up the stages of love's first flowering are gentler, shyer, slower, less determined for them. Women are therefore more inclined to be constant, since it is harder for them to put a stop to a crystallisation already begun.

On seeing her lover, a woman must swiftly weigh up her situation or yield to the bliss of loving – bliss from which she is abruptly torn if he makes the slightest advance, for she must then drop all her pleasures and mount her own defence.

The lover's role is simpler. He gazes into the eyes of the woman he loves; a single smile can put him in very heaven, and he seeks constantly to obtain one.[‡] Men are humiliated by the length of the siege; by contrast this confirms a woman's glory.

A woman is capable of loving and, over a whole year, of not saying more than ten or twelve words to the man she prefers. In a corner of her heart she keeps count of the number of times she has seen him: she went to a show with him twice, two further times she found herself dining with him, he greeted her three times while out walking.

[†] We recall here Beaumarchais's maxim, 'Nature tells women: be beautiful if you can, wise if you like, but whatever happens be reputable.' In France, without reputation there can be no admiration, and hence no love.

[‡] *Quando leggemo il disiato riso*

*Esser baciato da cotanto amante,
Questi che mai da me non fia diviso
La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante.*

– Dante, *Francesca da Rimini.*⁷

One evening, over a little game, he kissed her hand; since then, it is remarked that under no pretext and at risk of appearing peculiar, she no longer allows anyone else to kiss her hand.

Léonore⁸ said if a man behaved like this, we would call him a feminine lover.

Chapter IX

I am making all possible efforts to be *dry*. I want to impose silence on my heart, which thinks it has much to say. I constantly fear having written nothing but a sigh, when I believe I have set down a truth.

Chapter X

As evidence for crystallisation, I shall simply offer the following anecdote.*

A young lady hears her relative Edouard has grown into a highly distinguished young man and is about to return from the army. She is assured that he is already in love with her from her reputation, however he will probably wish to see her before declaring his love and asking her parents for her hand. She catches sight of a young stranger at church, she hears him called Edouard, she can think of nothing but him, she loves him. A week later the real Edouard arrives, it is not the one from church, she blanches and will be unhappy forever if she is forced to marry him.

This is what dull-witted people call one of the follies of love.

A generous man showers an unhappy young woman with the most delicate favours; a suitor could hardly possess more

* Empoli, June 1819.

virtues, and love would have resulted but for his wearing a poorly intended hat, and that she sees him mount his horse awkwardly. The young lady admits, sighing, that she cannot respond to the attentions he shows her.

A man pays court to the truest woman in the world. She learns that this gentleman has been subject to physical misfortunes and mockery; at once he becomes unbearable to her. And yet she had no previous thoughts of giving herself to him, and these hidden misfortunes in no way injure his wit and amiability. It is simply that crystallisation has been made impossible.

In order for a man to devote himself utterly to deifying some lovely object, whether in the forest of Arden⁹ or at a Coulon ball, the object must first appear perfect to him, not in *every* aspect, but in all that he can see. And she will not seem perfect, at any rate, until they are several days into the second crystallisation. Quite simply, it is enough to have an idea of perfection in order to discern it in the person we love.

We see how essential *beauty* is to the birth of love. Ugliness must not become an obstacle. The lover will soon manage to find his mistress beautiful as she is, without any thought of *true beauty*.

The features that make up true beauty would promise, if he saw them (and if I may so express myself), a degree of happiness that I will quantify by the number one, and his mistress's features just as they are promise a thousand units of happiness.

Prior to the birth of love, beauty is important as a *banner*; it predisposes us towards that passion by means of the praise we hear lavished on her whom we are going to love. A keen admiration makes the slightest expectations decisive.

In mannered love, and perhaps in the first five minutes of passionate love, a woman taking a lover pays more attention to the way other women see him than to how she herself sees him.

Hence the success of princes and officers.*

The pretty women at old Louis XIV's court were all in love with their prince.

Care must be taken not to allow hopes to build too high before being sure there is admiration. The outcome will be a disappointing lack of sparkle, which makes love completely impossible, or at least can only be remedied by some attack on your self-esteem.

We don't warm to the *foolish*, nor to a smile that lights up for all comers. Hence, in company, the need for a veneer of worldly wisdom; that's the finishing touch in true manners. Not even *laughter* will grow on a plant that is too degraded. In love, our vanity scorns an easy triumph; indeed, most men set little value on anything offered to them for free.

Chapter XI

Once crystallisation has begun, we delight in the joys of each new beauty discovered in our loved one.

But what is beauty? It is a new faculty for pleasure.

Each person's pleasures are different, and often contradictory: this well explains how what is beauty for one man is ugliness for another (for a conclusive example, read Del Rosso and de Lisio, 1st January 1820¹⁰).

* 'Those who remarked in the physiognomy of the Prince a dissolute audacity mingled with extreme haughtiness and indifference to the feelings of others, could not yet deny to his countenance that sort of comeliness which belongs to an open set of features, well formed by nature, modelled by art to the usual rules of courtesy, yet so far frank and honest, that they seemed as if they disclaimed to conceal the natural working of the soul. Such an expression is often mistaken for *manly frankness*, when in truth it arises from the reckless indifference of a libertine disposition, conscious of *superiority of birth, of wealth*, or of some other adventitious advantage, totally unconnected with personal merit.' – Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*.

To define the nature of beauty, we ought to examine the nature of each individual's pleasures. For example, Del Rosso demands a woman who will allow the occasional risky move, and whose smiles show her readiness for serious amusement. Such a woman will keep physical pleasure constantly in mind, and so both inspire Del Rosso's own style of gallantry and give him opportunities to display it.

By 'love', it seems Del Rosso means physical love, while Lisio means passionate love. Nothing is clearer than that they will disagree over the meaning of beauty.[†]

The beauty you will discover being a new means of procuring pleasure, and pleasures varying as much as people, each man's crystallisation will be *coloured* by the palette of that man's pleasures.

The crystallisation of a man's mistress – that is, her *beauty* – is none other than the assembly of *all the fulfilments* of all the desires that he has successively formed about her.

Chapter XII

Crystallisation, Further

Why do we so exult in each new beauty discovered in the one we love?

It is because each new discovery affords you complete fulfilment of a new desire. You want her loving, she is loving; next you wish her proud like Corneille's Emilie, and while these qualities are probably incompatible, just this second she seems to go quite Roman.¹¹ This is the reason why, morally, love is the strongest of the passions. In the others, desires have to adapt to cold reality; with love, reality is eagerly reshaped according to

[†] For my purpose, *beauty* means the promise of a quality that nourishes my soul. It goes much further than physical attraction; that is only one aspect of beauty. 1815.

your desires. Therefore, of all the passions, it is love that permits the greatest scope for pleasure in violent desires.

These are the general conditions for happiness which allow the fulfilment of every particular desire:

1. She seems to belong to you, for you alone can make her happy.

2. She is judge of your merit. This condition used to be very important in the gallant and chivalrous courts of François I and Henri II, and at the elegant court of Louis XV. Under a rational, constitutional government, women lose this entire realm of influence.

3. For romantic hearts, the more sublime the soul of your beloved, the more celestial and the further removed from the mire of all vulgar concerns will be the pleasures you find in her arms.

Most young Frenchmen of eighteen are disciples of J.-J. Rousseau, so this condition of happiness is significant for them.

In the midst of operations so frustrating to the pursuit of happiness, you can lose your head.

From the moment he begins to love, even the wisest man no longer sees any object *as it is*. At the least, he underrates his own advantages and exaggerates the meanest favours shown him by the object of his love. Now his fears and hopes enter the realm of the *romantic* (and *wayward*). Nothing can now be due to luck; he loses all sense of likeliness. Everything he imagines becomes real and present according to its effect on his happiness.*

A disturbing sign that you are losing your head: thinking about some small, obscure detail, you remember it as white and interpret that favourably for your love. A moment later you

* There is a physical cause, a beginning of madness, a flow of blood to the head, a disorder of the nerves and the cerebral core. Look at the ephemeral courage of deer and also the colours of a castrato's thoughts. In 1922, physiology will be able to describe the physical elements of this phenomenon. I recommend it to the attention of M. Edwards.

realise that in fact it was black, and yet still you find it auspicious for your love.

It's at this point that a soul prey to mortal doubts feels a great need for a friend, but a lover no longer has friends. This used to be well known at court. It is the source of the only kind of indiscretion that a noble lady may excuse.

Chapter XIII

The First Step, High Society, Misfortunes

The most startling thing about passionate love is the first step; it is the extravagance of the change that happens in a man's head.

High society, with its dazzling parties, helps love along by facilitating that *first step*.

It begins with the change from simple admiration (no. 1) to tender admiration (no. 2): what pleasure to kiss her, etc.

A fast-paced waltz, in a ballroom lit by a thousand candles, will so intoxicate young hearts that all timidity is eclipsed and their sense of their own strength multiplied manifold, until it finally confers on them the *audacity to love*. For it is not enough to see a lovely object; on the contrary, excessive charm will discourage sensitive types. You must see her, if not loving you,[†] then at least stripped of her proud majesty.

Who would dare fall in love with a queen without her prior encouragement?[‡]

Nothing, then, is more likely to lead to the birth of love than the combination of bored solitude and a few rare and long-awaited balls. This is how wise mothers manage their daughters.

[†] Hence the possibility of passions that begin in artifice, as here, or as with Benedick and Beatrice [Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*].

[‡] See Struensee's amorous adventures in *The Northern Courts*, Brown (1818).

True high society as one used to find it at the French court,* and which I believe has not existed since 1780,† was not a fertile ground for love, for it made *solitude* and leisure almost impossible, both being indispensable to the process of crystallisation.

Court life teaches the habit of observing and communicating a great number of *subtle meanings*, and the smallest subtlety may be the beginning of an admiration, and so, of a passion.‡

When love's misfortunes are mixed with other troubles (problems of *vanity*, if your mistress offends your sense of pride, your notions of honour and personal dignity; misfortunes in health, money, political persecution, etc), only superficially does it appear that love benefits from these setbacks. Since they occupy the imagination with other concerns, they hinder crystallisation in a nascent love, and in contented love, they delay the vital formation of tiny doubts. The sweet-ness of love and its insanity return when these misfortunes disappear.

You will see that such misfortunes do favour the birth of love in superficial or insensitive personalities, and that if the misfortunes begin before the love, they encourage love's flourishing, for the imagination turns away from the sorry

* See Mme du Deffand's letters, and those of Mlle de Lespinasse; Besenval's, Lauzun's and Mme d'Epinay's memoirs; Mme de Genlis's 'dictionary of etiquette'; also Dangeau's memoirs and those of Horace Walpole.

† With the possible exception of the court at St Petersburg.

‡ See Saint-Simon¹² and *Werther*.¹³ However tender-hearted and delicate a solitary man may be, his soul is distracted, a portion of his mind is set to anticipating society. Force of character is one of those charms that most enchant the truly feminine heart. Hence the success of serious young officers. Women can quite easily distinguish between strength of character and the violent gestures of passion, of which they feel the potential in their own hearts – although the most exceptional women are sometimes taken in by a little charlatanism of this sort. This can be used without fear, as soon as you are sure that crystallisation has begun.

prospects of life's other circumstances and throws itself completely into the work of crystallisation.

Chapter XIV

Here is an impression on which many will challenge me, although it relates only to men unhappy enough, so to speak, to have loved passionately over many long years, yet whose love has been frustrated by unscalable obstacles.

In nature as in art, the sight of anything that is extremely beautiful recalls the memory of the one we love like a flash of lightning. For, by the same process as the branch in the Salzburg mine becoming fringed with diamonds, all that is beautiful and sublime in the world becomes part of our loved one's beauty, and this unexpected vision of happiness straight away fills our eyes with tears. Thus the love of beauty and love itself inspire each other.

One of the sorrows in life is that the happiness of seeing and conversing with your loved one leaves no distinct memories. The heart must be too absorbed by its emotions to notice what is causing or attending them. It becomes entirely sensation and can observe nothing. Indeed, it may be because these pleasures cannot be exhausted by endless deliberate reminiscences that they return with such force when some object drags us from the abstract contemplation of our love, and reminds us of her more vividly by some new connection. §

A dry old architect used to meet *her* every evening in company. One day, swept up in the moment and paying no attention to what I was saying, || I began to praise him in terms both tender and pompous, and she laughed at me. I didn't dare explain: because *he* is able to see you every evening, and I must stay away!

§ Scents.

|| See note ‡ to p. 11.

This feeling is so powerful that it extends even to my enemy, who was always at her side.¹⁴ When I see her, she reminds me so of Léonore that I cannot hate her just then, however much I try.

You might say that due to some strange quirk of the heart, the beloved lady conveys more charm than she herself possesses. The image of the far-away town where she was sighted for just a moment* throws me into a deeper and sweeter reverie than her actual presence. Such is the effect of hardship in love.

Love's dream land cannot be set down in black and white. I note that I can reread a good novel every three years with just as much pleasure. It stimulates more thoughts about whatever is the object of my tenderest concerns at the time, or at least gives variety to my ideas, if no emotions. I can also listen with pleasure to the same music, although then memory must take no part: imagination alone should be at work. If an opera gives more pleasure in its twentieth performance, that's because we understand the music better, or because it recalls our impressions of the first time we heard it.

As for the new perspectives novels offer for our understanding of the human heart, I recall my old views perfectly well, and I like finding them jotted in the margins. In fact, this type of pleasure in returning to novels only applies to their furtherance of my knowledge of mankind; it does not work at all for the reverie that is the novel's true pleasure. That reverie is unjottable. To note it down is to destroy its life in the present moment, for we fall into a philosophical analysis of the pleasure; and that is guaranteed to block its future development, since nothing paralyses the imagination like a

* ... *Nessun maggior dolore*
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria.

— Dante, *Francesca*¹⁵

summons to remember. If I chance upon a marginal note sketching my feelings on reading *Old Mortality* in Florence three years ago, I am instantly plunged into an evaluation of my relative happiness in the two different periods of my life; in short I am deep in philosophy, and must say goodbye for a while to the free flow of loving feelings.

Every great poet with a lively imagination is shy, which is to say he fears men for the interruptions and disturbances with which they can disturb his delicious daydreams. It is his concentration that he trembles for. Wielding their crude concerns, men descend to tear him out of the gardens of Armida¹⁶ and push him into a fetid quagmire, and they can scarcely make him attend to them without annoying him. It is their habit of nourishing their souls with touching reveries, as well as their horror of the vulgar, that keep great artists so intimate with love.

The greater the artist, the more he should seek out titles and decorations, as ramparts against the world.

Chapter XV

In the midst of the most violent and embattled passion, we may come upon moments when suddenly it seems we are no longer in love, like finding a sweet-water spring in the middle of the ocean. We lose almost all pleasure in thinking of our mistress and, despite being overwhelmed by the hardships of love, we discover we are even more miserable with life's new emptiness. The saddest and most hopeless abyss follows on a time that was indeed turbulent, but then all of nature glowed anew in a fascinating, exalted light.

It is like this: your last visit to her whom you love has put you once more in a position which, on an earlier occasion, your imagination harvested thoroughly for sweet sensations. For example, after a period of coolness, she is less distant and allows

you to conceive the same degree of hope you seized on from the same outward signs as before. The imagination then finds memory blocking the path ahead with warnings of calamity, and crystallisation* stops dead.

Chapter XVI

*In a small port whose name I do not know,
near Perpignan, 25th February 1822[†]*

I am beginning to feel that music, when perfect, lifts the heart exactly as when you delight in the presence of your beloved. This means that music gives what must be the most profound happiness available on this earth.

If it were so for all men, nothing in the world could prepare them more for love.

But I have already remarked, last year in Naples, that like a perfect mime show,[‡] perfect music turns my thoughts to what currently occupies my meditations and inspires me with excellent ideas. In Naples they were about ways of arming the Greeks.

Now this evening, I cannot deny I have the misfortune of being too great an admirer of milady L.¹⁸

* I am being advised to drop this word, or if I have not the literary skill to manage that, to reiterate frequently that what I mean by *crystallisation* is a certain fever of the imagination that makes the most ordinary of objects unrecognisable and sets them apart from everything else. Among those whose happiness only comes from vanity, it is important that he who would arouse this fever keep his tie perfectly knotted and attend to a thousand details, neglecting nothing. Society women will admit to the effect, even while denying or failing to see the cause.

† Copied from Lisio's journal.¹⁷

‡ *Othello* and *The Vestal Virgin*, ballets by Viganò, danced by La Pallerini and Molinari.

And perhaps the perfect music that I have happily encountered after two or three months of privation, despite going to the Opera every evening, has quite simply produced nothing but its old familiar effect, I mean that of making me think more intensely of what is already on my mind.

4th March, eight days later

I dare neither scratch out nor approve the observation above. When I was writing it I certainly read it in my heart. If I doubt it today, that may be because I have forgotten what I saw so clearly then.

A habit of music and its fantasies predisposes to love. As long as it is not too dramatic, forcing the imagination to think of action, a sad tender air purely offering dreams of love is balm for sensitive and unhappy souls: for example the extended clarinet passage at the beginning of the quartet in Bianca and Falliero, and the centrepiece of La Camporesi's recitative.

The lover who is content with his loved one will delight in the celebrated duet from Rossini's Armida, which describes so well the tiny doubts of happy love and the moments of rapture that follow reconciliations. The instrumental section in the middle of the duet, at the point when Rinaldo wants to flee, represents the battle of the passions in such an astonishing way that the music seems to have a physical influence on his heart, really to move him. I do not dare say what I feel on this subject; I will appear insane to Northern people.

Chapter XVII

Beauty Deposed by Love

Albéric meets a woman more beautiful than his mistress in an opera box. I beg you permit me to describe this mathematically: I propose that perfect beauty be represented by a total of four units; assume then that this lady's features promise three units of happiness instead of his mistress's two.

Is it surprising that he prefers his mistress's features, which promise him a hundred units of happiness? Even her smallest facial flaws, a smallpox scar for example, will melt a man in love and throw him into deep reveries when he sees them in another woman; how moving would they be when seen on his mistress's face? For he has felt a thousand feelings in the presence of that smallpox scar, feelings for the most part exquisite and certainly of the greatest interest. So all these feelings, whatever their specifics, rush back with amazing vitality, even at the sight of this feature on another woman's face.

If in this way we manage to prefer and love *ugliness*, it is because in this case ugliness is beauty.* A man was passionately in love with a very thin, pox-scarred woman; death tore her from him. Three years later, in Rome, admitted to the company of two women – one lovelier than the day, the other one thin and scarred by pox and, therefore, if you will, quite ugly – I see him in love with the ugly one after a week in which he has busied himself blotting out her ugliness with his memories. The less pretty one did not fail to help get his blood up with some entirely excusable flirtation, which certainly helps this process along.[†]

A man meets a woman and is shocked by her ugliness. Yet soon, if she does not put on airs, the character of her countenance makes him forget her flawed features, he finds her charming and understands that one could love her. A week later he has hopes, a week after that his hopes are denied, one more week and he is crazy about her.

* Beauty is but the *promise* of happiness. A Greek's happiness was different from that of a Frenchman of 1822. Look particularly for the Venus de' Medici's eyes and compare them to those of Pordenone's Mary Magdalen (in the house of M. de Sommariva).

† If we are certain of a woman's love, we analyse whether she is more or less beautiful; if we doubt her feelings, we have no time to think about her face.

Chapter XVIII

At the theatre, we can see something similar with actors adored by the public; their audiences no longer notice what they possess in the way of real beauty or ugliness. Despite his remarkable ugliness, Lekain enjoyed an abundance of lovers, Garrick too.¹⁹ This was for several reasons, but mostly because people no longer saw the actors' true features or manners, but rather the beauty that their imaginations had long been used to lending them, in recognition and in memory of all the pleasures they had provided. For example, the mere sight of a comic actor's face makes us laugh, as soon as he steps on stage.

A girl being taken to the *Théâtre Français* for the first time might find Lekain quite repellent during the first scene, but soon he will be making her weep and tremble along with the rest; and how can we resist him in the role of Voltaire's Tancred[‡] or his Orosmane? If she can still perceive something of his ugliness, the raptures of an entire audience and the *emotional* effect that these have on a young heart[§] will swiftly obscure it. None of the ugliness will remain except for the

‡ See Mme de Staël, in *Delphine*, I believe: such is the artifice of the prettiest women.²⁰

§ I would be tempted to attribute the prodigious and mysterious effect of fashionable music to just this emotional affinity (at Dresden, for Rossini, 1821). As soon as the fashion has passed, the music is no worse for it; nevertheless it loses its effect on young girls' honest hearts. It may be that it pleased them also by its stimulating effect on the emotions of young men. Mme de Sévigné (letter 202, 6th May 1672) told her daughter:

'Lully had made one last great effort in his compositions for the king: his beautiful *Miserere* reappeared with even more moving passages, and there was a *Libera* which brought tears to the eyes of all who listened.'

We can no more doubt the truth of this effect than we could dispute Mme de Sévigné's wit or delicacy. The music by Lully that so enchanted her would leave us cold these days: at that time his work encouraged *crystallisation*; it makes it impossible today.

word, and not even that, for we often heard women devoted to Lekain calling out, 'How handsome he is!'

Remember that *beauty* is an expression of character or, in other words, of moral constitution; consequently it is independent of any passion. Beauty can offer only *probabilities* about a woman, and only probabilities that apply to her in tranquillity, unmoved — *passion* is what we really need. The glances of your pox-scared mistress are a charming reality which annihilates all probabilities.

Chapter XIX

Exceptions to Beauty, Further

The morning after some public appearance, sensitive, spiritual women, who happen also to be shy and fearful, will painfully examine a thousand times over everything they managed to say or hint the night before. I would say that such women easily become used to a lack of good looks in men, yet this is scarcely

* That is the advantage of keeping up with fashion. If we disregard the facial flaws already discussed and which no longer affect the imagination, we will focus instead on one of the following forms of beauty:

1. Among the people, the idea of wealth;
2. In society, the idea of elegance, either material or moral;
3. At court, the idea: I want to please women.

Almost everywhere people grow attached to a mixture of these three ideas. Happiness connected with the idea of wealth links up with delicacy in one's amusements, which follows on to the idea of elegance, and the whole group of ideas applies to love. In one way or another, the imagination is drawn to novelty. Thus we manage to fall in with some very ugly man without thinking of his ugliness, and in the end, his ugliness becomes beauty.

In 1788 in Vienna, Mme Viganò, a dancer and fashionable woman, was pregnant, and soon the women were sporting little bellies *à la Viganò*. For the same topsy-turvy reasons, nothing can be worse than an outdated fashion. The essence of bad taste is to confuse fashion, which only survives through constant changes, with lasting beauty, the fruit of government X operating in the propitious climate of Y. In ten years' time, today's fashionable buildings will be out of date. They will be less offensive in

an obstruction to inspiring their love.

By the same principle, the beauty quotient of an adored mistress becomes immaterial when she is overwhelming you with her cruelties. Crystallisation of her beauty stops, and when a would-be saviour friend tells you she isn't even pretty and you almost agree, he thinks you have made a great step forward in your cure.

My friend the gallant Captain Trab described to me this evening what he used to feel on seeing Mirabeau.

No one who saw this great man felt any disagreeable sensation in the eyes; I mean, none found him ugly. Swept up by his thundering words, we cared for nothing but the pleasure of admiring the *beauty* in his face. Since he had hardly any *beautiful* features (neither sculptural beauty nor painterly), we cared only for another form of beauty: * his beautiful expression.

While the mind was shutting out all Mirabeau's ugliness – artistically speaking – it was focusing with delight on the smallest of his tolerable points, for example, the beauty of his flowing mane; if he had sported antlers we would have thought them beautiful. †

200 years when we have forgotten the fashion. Lovers are quite silly to bother with fine clothes; one has too much else to think of when seeing one's beloved to worry about one's appearance. Rousseau said, you look at your lover but you don't analyse her. If that analysis occurs, it's a case of mannered love, not passionate love. The brilliant aura of beauty is almost off-putting in one we love; we have no need to see her as beautiful, but we do want her loving and languishing. Dress has no effect on love except for young girls who, strictly guarded in the paternal home, often can only find passion by means of the eyes. – Related by L. [Lisio], 15th September 1820

† Either for their polish, or for their dimensions, or for their shape; for such reasons, or by associations of ideas (see above on smallpox scars), a woman in love may become accustomed to her lover's flaws. The Russian princess C. became very friendly with a man who, frankly, had no nose. An idea of courage, and an image of the pistol loaded and intended for himself in despair at this misfortune, as well as pity for his signally bad luck, helped along by the conviction that he would get better and that his recovery was already begun, all together worked this miracle. The poor wounded man must appear untroubled by his misfortune. – Berlin, 1807

The nightly presence of a pretty dancer forces those blasé or unimaginative souls who decorate the balcony at the Opera to pay attention. With her graceful, daring and original movements, she awakens physical love and perhaps provides her audience with the only crystallisation still possible for them. So it is that an ugly duckling might not be given the time of day, especially by jaded types, yet if she appears on stage often enough can make herself quite adored. Geoffroy²¹ said that the theatre is a woman's pedestal. The more famous a dancer and the longer past her prime, the more highly she is valued; hence Chamfort's proverb about the theatre wings, 'She who will give herself to none may yet find those who will pay for her.' These girls borrow some of their passions from their lovers, and are very susceptible to falling in love out of *burt pride*.

How can a man fail to discover generous and even loving feelings for an actress whose features contain nothing discordant, whom he watches for two hours every evening expressing the noblest sentiments and of whom he has no other knowledge at all? When at last he is admitted to her home, her features remind him of such agreeable thoughts that, however sordid her surroundings may sometimes appear, all about him takes on an affecting and romantic glamour.

* An unseemly sentence, copied from the memoirs of my friend, the late Baron de Bottmer.²² Feramorz used the same ploy to appeal to Lalla-Rookh. See the charming poem by Thomas Moore, 1817.

† Obviously the author is neither a prince nor a millionaire. I wanted to say my piece on this before my readers could!

‡ Miss Ashton, Lammermoor's fiancée. A man of experience can recall myriad examples of love affairs, has in fact an embarrassment of them to draw on. But when he wants to write, he no longer knows which to choose. Anecdotes from particular groups of friends are unknown to his public, and it would take far too many pages to tell them all with the required nuances. Therefore I quote from novels since their stories are well known, but none of the *ideas* I present to my readers are founded on these empty fictions, most of which aim more for picturesque effect than for truth.

'In my early youth,' my friend said, 'I was an enthusiast of the very dull French tragedy of the time* when I had the pleasure of dining with Mlle Olivier. I was constantly surprised to find myself quite overawed, for I believed myself in the company of a queen. To this day I have never truly known if I fell in love with a queen or simply a pretty girl.'

Chapter XX

Perhaps men who are not given to passionate love affairs are those who feel beauty's effects most keenly. At least, beauty creates the strongest impression a woman can have on them.

The man who has felt that thump of the heart caused by a far-off sighting of his beloved's white satin hat, is quite bemused by his own cool reaction to the approach of the greatest beauty in the world. He may even feel a certain irritation on observing the raptures of others.

Extremely beautiful women dazzle less on the second day. This is a great misfortune, for it hinders crystallisation. Their merit being visible to all and a fine ornament, they must count more fools among the list of their lovers: princes, millionaires and similar.[†]

Chapter XXI

On First Sightings

An imaginative soul is tender and *mistrustful*; I would say so even of the most naive of women.[‡] She can be mistrustful without hesitation; she has had so many disappointments in life! So all that is expected and formal in a man's presentation can alarm the imagination and banish all chances of crystallisation. On the contrary, love triumphs in romance at first sight.

There is nothing simpler; the astonishment that makes us dwell on something extraordinary is already halfway towards the mental state required for crystallisation.

I quote the following from the start of Séraphine's love affairs (*Gil Blas*, vol. II, p. 142). Here is Don Fernando recounting his escape, pursued by the *sbirri* of the Inquisition:

After crossing several walks, I came to a saloon, and here too the door was left open. On my entrance, [I drank in] the magnificence so handsomely displayed... On one side of the saloon there was a door ajar; by pushing it a little wider open, I discovered a range of apartments, with a light only in the furthest. 'What is to be done now?' thought I within myself... but curiosity was not to be repelled... Advancing boldly from room to room, at length I reached that where the light was. It was a wax taper on a marble slab, in a magnificent candlestick... but soon afterwards, casting a look towards a bed, of which the curtains were half undrawn on account of the heat, an object arrested my attention, which engrossed it with the deepest interest. A young lady, in spite of the thunderclaps which had been pealing round her, was sleeping there, motionless and undisturbed. I approached her... A sensation of transport and delight came over me... While I was drinking in floods of adoration at the shrine of her beauty, the goddess of my homage awoke.

You may well suppose her consternation, at seeing a man, an utter stranger, in her bedchamber, and at midnight. She was terrified at this strange appearance, and uttered a loud shriek. I did my best to restore her composure, and throwing myself on my knees in the humblest posture, 'Madam,' said I, 'fear nothing...' She called her woman... Nevertheless, assuming somewhat of courage from [her servant's] presence, she asked me haughtily who I was, etc., etc., etc.²³

Now that is a first sighting that would be hard to forget. On the other hand, what could be more stupid in our present moral

climate than the official, even sentimental introduction of a young girl and her *intended*! Legal prostitution: it is quite shameless. Chamfort says:

This afternoon, the 17th of February 1790, I have just seen what we call a family ceremony, by which is meant that apparently honest men, respectable company, toast the happiness of Mlle de Marille, a handsome, vivacious and virtuous young person who is lucky enough to be wedding M. R., an ugly, doddery old man who is moreover dishonest and slow-witted but also rich, and whom she has met today for the third time in her life, to sign the contract.

If anything typifies our sorry century it is our celebration of such an occasion, the absurdity of such joy and, from this perspective, the prudish cruelty with which this very same society will not hesitate to spurn a poor young woman in love when she commits the slightest imprudence.

By its nature constructed and planned in advance and obliging us to behave *with due decorum*, everything ceremonial paralyses the imagination, leaving us attracted by nothing but what runs counter to the ceremony's object, or would make a mockery of it; hence the magical effect of the smallest joke. Our poor eligible girl, desperately shy and modest throughout her future spouse's formal introduction, can think only of the role she is playing; this too is a sure way of stifling the imagination.

It is a much greater crime against modesty to go to bed with a man one has seen only twice, after three words of Latin spoken at church, than to yield in spite of oneself to a man one has loved for two years. But I am talking nonsense.

Popery is the fertile source of all the vices and unhappiness that dog today's marriages. It makes freedom impossible for girls before marriage, and their divorce impossible afterwards, when they discover their mistake, or rather once we have deceived them about the choice we forced upon them. Look at Germany,

that country of happy households, where the delightful princess Mme the Duchess of Sagan has just got married in all good faith for the fourth time. She did not forget to invite her three previous husbands to the celebrations – since she still gets on with all three perfectly. That is excess! But a single divorce, fair punishment for a husband's tyrannies, can save us millions of unhappy households. It is amusing, then, to find that Rome is one of the regions where we see the most divorces.

Chapter XXII

On Infatuation

Delicate minds have a strong bent for curiosity and prejudice; we can see this above all in souls whose sacred fire is extinguished, the source of their passions burnt out: it is one of the most damaging symptoms. Schoolboys just entering the adult world also suffer infatuations. At the two extremes, with either too much or too little sensitivity, it is not easy to feel the due effect of things, or experience the sensation they ought to give. Inflamed souls or those only occasionally ardent, professing love on credit, if I may put it so, throw themselves on the object of their love rather than waiting.

Before the beloved's own characteristics can affect them, before even seeing them, these misguided souls smother the true person in an imaginary charm drawn from their own inexhaustible source. Then, as they become closer, they see their darling not as they are but as they have made them and, while believing they take great delight in their loved one, they are simply delighting in their own conceptions. One fine day, however, weary of doing all the work, they discover that the object of their adoration *is not returning the ball*; the infatuation drops away and the blow to their self-esteem makes them unjust towards the person they once idolised.

Chapter XXIII

On Love at First Sight

We ought to move on from this hackneyed expression; nevertheless, it does happen. I have seen the noble and lovely Wilhelmine, the despair of Berlin's young blades, who despised love and mocked its follies. Sparkling with youth, wit, beauty and advantages of every kind, she was blessed by a limitless fortune that, by allowing her to develop her best qualities, seemed to conspire with nature to offer the world a rare instance of perfect happiness allied to a character entirely worthy of it. At twenty-three, she had been at court long enough to have rejected suits from the highest quarters. Her modest but unshakeable virtue was held up as an example, and the most eligible men despaired of pleasing her, thenceforth aspiring only to her friendship.

One evening she went to Prince Ferdinand's ball and danced for ten minutes with a young captain.

'From that second,' she later wrote to a friend,* 'he was master of my heart and me, to a degree that would have filled me with terror if the joy of seeing Herman had left me any time to care for the rest of life. I cared only to see whether he would notice me.'

'My only consolation now is the conviction that a superior power blinded me to reason and my whole self. I have no words even to sketch how far my whole being was disordered and turned upside down at the mere sight of him. I blush to think of the speed and violence with which I was drawn to him. If, when he spoke to me at last, his first words had been, "Do you adore me?", in truth I could not have denied it. I had never imagined that feelings could be so sudden and so unforeseen. It was so overpowering that at one point I thought I had been poisoned.'

* Translated literally from Bottmer's *Memoirs* [see note 22].

‘Unfortunately, my dear friend, you and the world know that I loved Herman truly. Well! He was indeed so dear to me after twenty minutes, that he could become no dearer thereafter. I could see all his faults, and I pardoned them all, as long as he loved me.

‘Shortly after we had danced together, the king left; Herman, whose detachment was on duty, was forced to follow. For me, everything in nature disappeared with him. I tried in vain to describe the overwhelming hopelessness with which I was struck down as soon as he was gone. It was equalled only by the keenness of my desire to be alone once more.

‘At last I was able to leave the ball. Scarcely had I double-locked my door than I began to struggle against my passion. I thought I was succeeding. Ah! My dear friend, but I paid dear that evening and the days that followed for the comfort of believing myself virtuous!*

What you have just read is an accurate account of something that turned into the scandal of the day, for, a month or two later, poor Wilhelmine was so unhappy that her feelings became plain to see. This was the origin of the long series of misfortunes which led to her perishing so young and in such a tragic fashion, poisoned either by her own hand or her lover’s. All we could see in this young captain was that he danced extremely well, was very gay and confident, had a great air of bounty and mixed with loose women. For the rest, he was extremely poor, not well born, nor did he attend the court.

Not only must women abandon their mistrust, but they must be quite weary of caution and their courage should, as it were, grow impatient with life’s hazards. Miserable at living without love and convinced in spite of itself by the examples of others, having overcome all fears in life and outgrown pride’s thin satisfaction, the loving soul will unintentionally dream up an ideal. One day she meets someone rather like her ideal, crystallisation

* A number of lines taken from Cr  billon, volume III.

recognises its object by the turbulence it inspires, and devotes forever to the master of her destiny what she has dreamt of for so long.*

The souls of women who suffer *this* misfortune are too noble to love other than with passion. They could avoid it if they were able to lower themselves to welcome mere gallantry.

Since love at first sight results from a hidden weariness with what the catechism calls virtue, and with the boredom bred by monotonous perfection, I imagine it must mostly strike those we might call 'lost sheep'. I very much doubt anyone of Cato's²⁴ type has ever occasioned such a bolt from the blue.

If the potential loving heart has the slightest idea of its situation, there can be no love at first sight, which is what makes it so rare.

A woman whom misfortune has made distrustful is immune to this hijacking of the soul.

Nothing smoothes the path of such bolts more than praise of the lady to be loved, proffered in advance and by women.

One of the most comical sources of adventures in love is mistaken love at first sight. For the duration of an evening, a bored and rather insensitive woman can believe she has found the love of her life. She is proud of having at last discovered one of those great movements of the soul that her imagination has been yearning for. The next day she is desperate to hide herself, and more than anything to avoid the unlucky man whom she adored the night before.

Witty people know how to make good use of *that* kind of love-bolt.

Physical love also has its bolts from the blue. Yesterday we saw the prettiest, most amiable woman in Berlin blush suddenly in her barouche, where we were all sitting. Handsome Lieutenant Findorff had just passed by. She fell into a deep, restless reverie. That evening, as she confessed to me in the theatre, she was in transports of rapture; she could think only of Findorff, to whom she had not addressed a word. If she had dared, she said, she

would have sent for him; that pretty face showed all the signs of the most violent passion. It lasted through the following day, but after three days, Findorff having made an ass of himself, she stopped thinking about him. A month later she thought him unbearable.

Chapter XXIV

Journey in an Unknown Land

I suggest that my Northern readers skip over this chapter. It is a marginal discussion of certain phenomena relating to the orange tree, which can only grow or reach its true height in Italy and Spain. I ought to have *pruned* the local detail, so as to be understood elsewhere.

I would certainly have done that had I ever intended to write a generally popular book. But heaven having denied me literary talent, my only aim is to describe – with all the bleakness of science but also its accuracy – certain facts of which a long stay in the land of the orange tree have made me the accidental witness. Never having seen the orange tree growing in native soil, Frederick the Great or any other distinguished North-erner would doubtless have denied the facts that follow, and in good faith. I have infinite respect for good faith, I do see its point. That sincere statement perhaps appearing arrogant, I will add the following reflection:

Each of us writes what we happen to think is true, and each contradicts his neighbour. I see our books as just so many lottery tickets; truly they are worth no more than this. Posterity, forgetting some and reprinting others, will declare which are the winners. Until then, each of us, having written his own truth as best he can, ought not to mock his neighbour, unless he is an accomplished satirist, in which case he always should, especially if he writes like M. Courier to Del Furia.²⁵

This preamble over, I will bravely begin an examination of facts which, I am convinced, have rarely been observed in Paris. All in all, though a city that surpasses all others, Paris harbours very few orange trees in native soil as they are found in Sorrento. It was in Sorrento, Tasso's native town, looking down over the bay of Naples, more picturesque than Naples itself but not a town of *Miroir*-readers, that Lisio Visconti observed and recorded the following facts:

When one is due to see the woman one loves in the evening, the expectation of such great happiness makes every second that precedes it unbearable.

An all-consuming fever makes us take up and drop twenty tasks. We check our watch every second, and are delighted to see that we have managed to pass ten minutes without looking at it. At last the long-awaited hour chimes and then, at her door, ready to knock, we would be glad to find she is out – only with hindsight would we regret it. In short, waiting to see her is an unpleasant experience.

It is one of those things that prompts ordinary folk to say that lovers are mad.

The trouble is that when we are dragged violently out of delicious reveries in which each step is a joy, the imagination awakens to a harsh reality.

In the struggle that begins as soon as you see her, a sensitive lover well knows that the slightest neglect, the least spot of carelessness or hesitation will be punished by a snub that long poisons love's reverie, and whose humiliation reaches even beyond the realm of passion, should you try to find refuge outside it. You berate yourself: 'I lacked presence of mind, I was not courageous'; but you would only demonstrate courage to one you love by daring to love them less.

In early conversations with the lady you love, that remnant of attention you manage to divert from the reveries of crystallisation is scarcely sufficient to stop you spouting a torrent of nonsense or of things that mean the opposite of what you

intended. Or, more painful still, you over-elaborate your feelings, and they come to seem ridiculous even to you. You vaguely sense you are not paying enough attention to what you're saying, and mechanically make an effort to focus your speech. And yet you cannot stop talking for fear of the embarrassment of a silence, which would further distract you from your beloved. So, with heartfelt sincerity, you say all manner of things you do not feel and that you would be hard pressed to remember a word of afterwards. You persist in avoiding her real presence in order to be all the more close to her at heart. When I first fell in love, this strange phenomenon made me fear it wasn't love.

I understand cowardice, and how conscripts overcome fear by rushing headlong into the heart of the fire. The number of inane things I have said in the last two years simply to avoid silence makes me despair when I think of it.

That at least is something women could use to distinguish between passionate love and gallantry, between the loving and the prosaic soul.*

At these crucial moments, the one stands to win where the other loses; the prosaic soul gains just that spark of warmth that it tends to lack, while the sensitive soul goes mad with excess of feeling and, in addition, with the need to conceal its trouble. Busy struggling to master his emotional transports, the sensitive lover has none of the coolness required to make the most of his situation, and leaves his lady's salon under a cloud where his prosaic rival would have made great advances. As soon as talk turns to his passion's all-too-intimate concerns, the proud, fervent soul's eloquence will vanish due to the proximity of his adored, for the failure of his suit would hurt too much. On the other hand, the vulgar soul only calculates his chances of success, without a thought for the pain of defeat, and, proud of his directness, makes a mockery of the fervent soul who, with

* As Léonore would put it.²⁶

all the presence of mind he can muster, is never sufficiently at ease to say the simple things that would assure his success.

The sensitive soul cannot grasp anything by force, rather he must rely on his beloved's sense of *charity* for her favours. If the woman we love is truly sensitive, there will always come a time when we regret having tormented ourselves by trying to talk to her of love. We come across as guilty, or cold; we would look dishonest too if passion did not show through by other, unmistakable signs. Explaining what we feel so keenly and profoundly every second of our lives is a burden we have assumed from reading novels; we would never naturally undertake something so tiresome. Instead of talking about what we felt fifteen minutes ago and trying to fit it into some broader, more interesting picture of life, we aim foolishly to express what we are feeling that very instant. Yet in this we do ourselves great violence for a much lesser success, and since what we say lacks the immediacy of that moment's feeling and memory too is tongue-tied, we cast around for acceptable phrases and come up with the most embarrassing inanities.

When at last, after an hour of torture, you make the enormous effort to withdraw from the imagination's enchanted gardens in order simply to enjoy your beloved's presence, you most likely find it is time to leave.

All this may seem extravagant, but I have witnessed even worse in the case of a friend. Claiming to be offended by some appalling act of indelicacy, the detail of which I never discovered, the woman he loved to the point of idolatry suddenly condemned him to visit her no more than twice a month.²⁷ So rare and so treasured, these visits were moments of pure madness for him, and it took all Salviati's strength of character to stop the whole world learning of his insanity.

The thought of the visit's end hangs over us right from the start, so we cannot enjoy any of it. We talk a lot without listening; often we will say the opposite of what we meant. We embark on convoluted discourses which we're obliged to cut off

mid-flow when we surface for a moment and recognise their idiocy. We are making such a violent effort to concentrate that we appear cold. Love is masked by its very intensity.

Away from her, the imagination has been cheered by dreams of the sweetest intimate discussions; we have drifted in a state of the most ardent rapture. Thus for ten or twelve days we feel brave enough to talk to her, but the day before the one that ought to be so happy, fever takes hold and only grows in proportion to the nearness of the dreadful moment.

In order not to do or say something incredibly stupid the instant you enter her salon, you are reduced to holding fast to a resolution of silence, and to gazing at her so that at least you will commit her face to memory. You are hardly in her presence when a sort of drunken haze assails your eyes. You feel yourself compelled like a lunatic to execute strange actions, you feel as if you had two selves: one that acts, and another that condemns your actions. You feel confusedly that by focusing on your follies you might cool your blood for a second, and thus lose sight of your visit's end and the misery of leaving her again for a fortnight.

If there happens to be some bore in the company, telling his dull anecdote, in his inexplicable madness the poor lover will be all ears, as if he rather fancies wasting the precious moments of his visit like this. That hour that he'd sworn would be so delightful is over in one searing flash, and yet with unspeakable bitterness he observes all the tiny signs that show what a stranger he has become to his beloved. Here he is surrounded by people with the most perfunctory affection for her, and finds himself the only one ignorant of all the little incidents in her life of the last few days. Finally he leaves, and on coolly bidding her good day, has the horrible thought that he is another fortnight away from seeing her again. No doubt at all he would suffer less if he never saw his beloved.

In the same vein, though even darker, is the Duke of Pollicastro's story: he would ride a hundred leagues every six

months to Lecce, there to see for just a quarter of an hour an adored mistress briefly unguarded by her jealous husband.

Will-power's lack of influence over love is clear to see, here: exasperated by your mistress and yourself, with what enthusiasm would you embrace indifference, if you could! The only good to come of this visit is a renewal of the precious crystallisation process.

For Salviati, life was divided into fortnight-long periods, each of which took on the mood of the evening he was permitted to see Mme – . For example, he was beside himself with happiness on 21st May, and on 2nd June he didn't come home for fear of giving in to the temptation to blow his brains out.

That evening, I realised that novelists do a poor job of describing the moment of suicide. 'I'm parched,' Salviati said to me, in a daze, 'I need this glass of water.' I didn't try to argue with him, but said my goodbyes, and he began to weep.

Considering the agitation that marks all lovers' exchanges, it would be unwise to set too much store by any isolated snatch of conversation. Their true feelings only show through in the unplanned utterances; then they speak from the heart. Besides, the general tone of what they say conveys the most. We have to remember that often a very emotional person is in no position to recognise the passion of the person who is causing his own.

Chapter XXV **Introductions**

I am full of admiration for the delicacy, the decisiveness with which women grasp certain facts. Then a moment later I see them praise some illiterate to the heavens, be moved to tears by an empty compliment, and set great value on a superficial affectation which they take for a profound character trait. I could not invent such silliness. There must be some fundamental law here that no one has told me.

Focused on *one* feature in a man, attracted by a *single* detail, they are quite absorbed by it and have no eyes for the rest. All their mental energy is directed to enjoying this single quality and they have none left for others.

I have seen the most remarkable men introduced to marvelously witty women; yet always a seed of prejudice would decide the outcome of their first meeting.

If you will allow me a moment of informality, I will tell you how the charming Colonel L.B.²⁸ was going to be introduced to Mme de Struve of Konigsberg, a first-class lady. We all wondered, '*Farà colpo?*' ('Would she fall for him?'). He lays a bet on it. I approach Mme de Struve and tell her that the Colonel has a habit of wearing his cravats two days running, turning them inside out on the second day; she should look for the vertical creases in them as proof. Nothing was more patently untrue.

As I finish speaking, this lovely man is announced. The most unprepossessing Parisian snob would have had more reaction from the lady. Mind you, Mme de Struve was in love and also an honest woman; there could never have been merely a mild flirtation between them.

Never were two characters more suited to each other. Mme de Struve was blamed for being too romantic, while it was said that virtue alone, taken to a fantastic degree, could touch L.B. He shot himself for her, very young.

Women have an admirable gift for detecting the nuances of affection, almost imperceptible changes of heart and the slightest cross-currents of confidence and esteem.

They have a faculty for this that is entirely missing in men. Watch how they care for a wounded man.

Yet perhaps they are also unable to detect cleverness, a moral composite. I have seen the most distinguished women barely charmed by a witty man – not me – while at the same time, almost in the same breath, gasping in admiration at the greatest fools. I feel like an expert condemned to watch the most

beautiful diamonds taken for paste and paste gems preferred simply for their size.

From this I conclude that one should dare everything when it comes to women. Where General Lasalle failed, a moustachio'd captain sworn to the cause of true love won through.* There must be a whole domain of a man's merits that completely escapes women.

Personally, I always go back to the laws of physic. A man's nervous fluid is expended in the brain, while a woman's goes to the heart; this is what makes them more vulnerable. A substantial piece of work in the profession we have followed all our lives will console us men, while for women, nothing can soothe them but amusement.

Appiani,²⁹ who puts no faith in virtue unless pushed to extremity, and in whose company this evening I was on the hunt for ideas, told me:

'The strength of character shown by Eponina³⁰ in her heroic determination to keep her husband alive in the underground cavern and stop him sinking into despair, is the same resource she would have used to hide a lover had she gone on living quietly in Rome. Strong characters need particular nourishment.'

Chapter XXVI On Modesty

A Madagascan woman will not hesitate to show that which we take the greatest care to conceal, but would die of shame rather than uncover her arm. Clearly, modesty is mostly learnt. It is perhaps the one rule born of civilisation that leads only to happiness.

It has been observed that birds of prey hide themselves when drinking, for they are defenceless at the moment of lowering

* Posen, 1807.

their heads to water. Having thought about how things work in Tahiti,* I think we have lighted on modesty's origins in nature.

Love is a miracle of civilisation. We find only the crudest of physical love among savage or essentially barbaric peoples.

Modesty also lifts love on the wings of imagination, and that gives it life.

Little girls learn modesty early, taught by mothers whose determined insistence derives from a kind of *esprit de corps*, for this allows women to ensure the happiness of their future lovers in advance.

Nothing is greater torture for a shy, sensitive woman than to have said or done something in a man's presence for which she feels obliged to blush. I am sure that any properly proud woman would rather die a thousand times over. A small liberty taken in all tenderness by the man she loves will give her an instant of keen pleasure;[†] but if he then looks disapproving or simply not transported with joy at her reaction, it must leave terrible doubts in her heart. For any woman superior to the common kind, then, there is everything to be gained from behaving with great reserve. The game is not equal: for the sake of a brief pleasure or the advantage of appearing a little more attractive, a woman risks the sharp sting of remorse and shame, which would sour even the love that moved her. It is a high price to pay for one merry and carefree evening. The sight of a lover with whom you fear having made this kind of mistake must be unwelcome for several days. The strength of women's habitual reserve is hardly surprising, since the slightest breach of it is punished by the most appalling shame.

As for modesty's uses, it is the mother of love; that is the end of the argument. Nothing could be simpler to see in the workings

* See the travels of Bougainville, Cook, etc. In some species, the female appears to resist just when in fact she is about to yield. We find the most significant revelations about ourselves in the study of the habits of different species.

† Shows his love in a new light.

of the emotions: the heart is concerned with feeling guilty instead of dwelling on its desires, it forbids further desire and, since desires lead to actions, none occur.

Of course, all proud and sensitive women – and being cause and effect, these qualities rarely occur separately – must learn to appear reserved, while those who are disconcerted by this will label it prudishness.

This accusation is all the more unjust for being difficult to keep in reasonable balance. If a woman has little intelligence and a good deal of pride, she may well come to believe that modesty can never be excessive. So it happens that Englishwomen believe you are insulting them when you mention certain items of clothing in their presence. Provincial Englishwomen take great care at evening parties to be seen leaving the room with their husband; even worse, they think their modesty compromised if they are cheerful in the company of anyone other than their husband.[†] Perhaps it is because of their extreme fastidiousness that the English, an intelligent people, appear so bored in their domestic contentment. The fault is theirs; why then be so self-righteous?[‡]

On the other hand, moving swiftly from Plymouth to Cadiz and Seville, I found in Spain that the fire of climate and passions made the people somewhat too forgetful of a certain seemly restraint. I noticed some very passionate caresses carried out in public, which, far from moving me, inspired rather opposite reactions. Nothing is more tiresome.

You must expect to find the habits women adopt in the name of modesty assume *immeasurable* influence. By exaggerating her delicacy, a vulgar woman may believe herself the equal of any noble one.

[†] See an admirable painting of these tiresome morals at the end of Mme de Staël's novel *Corinne*; and the author has been gentler in her depiction than she might have been.

[‡] Both the Bible and the aristocracy take cruel revenge on those who believe they owe everything to them.

Such is the power of modesty that a sensitive woman may betray herself to her lover more by what she does than by what she says.

The loveliest, richest and least particular woman in Bologna has just told me that yesterday evening some conceited Frenchman who is staying here (and who gives a pretty idea of his countrymen) took it into his head to hide under her bed. Apparently, he did not wish to waste the endless absurd declarations with which he has been pursuing her for the last month. But our good man did not have his wits about him: he waited for Mme M- to dismiss her maid and go to bed, but he had not the patience to give the household time to fall asleep. She flew to her bell and had him chased out red-faced in a great mêlée of cries and clouts from her five or six menservants.

‘What if he had waited two hours?’ I asked her.

‘I would have been in a dreadful fix: “Who would have doubted,” he said to me, “that I am here on your own orders?”’*

On leaving this charming lady, I went to visit the woman most worthy of love that I know. Her extreme delicacy is, if it is possible, even greater than her stirring beauty. I find her alone, so I retell the story of Mme M-. We discuss it:

‘Listen,’ she says, ‘if the man who dares to do such a thing was attractive in the lady’s eyes before it, she will forgive him and will come to love him.’

I confess I was stunned by this unexpected light thrown on the depths of the human heart. After a moment’s silence, I replied:

‘But when a man is in love, has he sufficient courage to attempt such outrageous violation?’

* I am advised to leave out this remark: ‘You must think me very immodest, to dare tell such stories in my presence.’

† Modesty is one source of taste in dress: by various adjustments a woman can promise more or less to her company. This is why fine dress is dispensed with by older women. If a provincial woman claims to follow Parisian fashions, she will look gauche and ridiculous. A provincial coming to Paris must begin by dressing as if she were thirty.

This chapter would have been a good deal more specific if a woman had written it. Everything relating to feminine pride, to customs of modesty and its excesses, to certain *refinements* with no connection to nature and most of which rely solely on *associations of feelings*[†] that men lack completely – all these things, I believe, can only feature here to the extent that I can rely on hearsay.

In a moment of philosophical candour, a woman told me something like this:

‘If I were ever to give up my liberty, the man I chose would appreciate my feelings all the more when he saw how miserly I had been before him with even my smallest favours.’

By holding out for a lover she may never meet, such an attractive woman may appear cold to the men she addresses today. This is modesty’s first excess, and a respectable one; the second originates in the pride of wives, while the third is triggered by that of husbands.

It seems to me that such dreams of love arise often even in the most virtuous woman’s reveries, and rightly. When heaven has given you a soul made for love, not to love is to deprive yourself and others of great happiness. It is as if an orange tree were not to flower for fear of committing a sin. What is more, for the passionate soul, all other happinesses pale in comparison to love. After the excitement of first experiences, the soul discovers an aching emptiness beneath the so-called pleasures of this world. A woman will claim to love the arts and the sublime aspects of nature, but all these do is promise love and glorify it further, if possible, and she soon sees that they speak of a love she has resolved to forgo.

The only regrettable aspect of modesty is that it fosters a habit of lying. This is the only advantage that loose women have over sensitive ones. A loose woman tells you:

‘My dear friend, as soon as I like you I will tell you, and I’ll be at least as happy about it as you, for I hold you in the highest esteem.’

Look at the keen satisfaction of Constance, exclaiming after her lover's victory:

'How glad I am to have given myself to no one else during the eight years since I quarrelled with my husband!'

However absurd I find this logic, her joy is refreshing all the same.

At this point I absolutely must recount how a lady of Seville lamented being abandoned by her lover. I ask my readers to remember that in love everything is meaningful, and above all, to indulge my style a little longer...

My masculine eyes are able to distinguish nine specific features of *modesty*.

1. A woman stakes much against little; she becomes highly reserved, often to the point of affectation. Hence she will not laugh, for example, at the most amusing things. Therefore, she requires great intelligence to strike just the right level of modesty.* This is why many women do not manage well at small parties; or rather the truth is they simply require the tales they hear to be sufficiently decent at first, so they may become more ribald as the evening grows in revelry.[†]

Could it be the fault of modesty and the deathly boredom it must cause for many women that the majority of them esteem nothing so highly in a man as crudeness? Or do they take insolence for a mark of character?

2. Second rule: my lover will think the more highly of me for it.

* Look at the tone of Genevan society, especially in the *best* families; how useful the court may be in tempering excessive instincts towards prudery through mockery. Duclos telling stories to Mme de Rochefort: 'In truth you believe we women to be much more high-minded than we are.'

Nothing in the world is more boring than false modesty.

† Ah, my dear Fronsac, there are twenty bottles of champagne between the tale you're beginning and what we were saying just now.

3. The force of habit will ensure that modesty wins out even in the most impassioned moments.

4. Modesty has highly flattering effects on the lover, since it makes him aware of all the laws she is transgressing for him.

5. And it heightens the *dizziness* of the woman's pleasures; since they are overcoming a long-nurtured habit, their hearts are all the more troubled. Say Count Valmont³¹ were to find himself in a pretty woman's bedroom at midnight – it happens to him every week, but to her perhaps once in two years. The combination of rarity and modesty must prepare women for infinitely deeper pleasures.[‡]

6. The problem with modesty is that it leads inevitably to lies.

7. Excessively severe modesty discourages shy and sensitive souls[§] from falling in love: that is, exactly the ones made for giving and feeling the delights of love.

‡ This is how it works with melancholy as compared to sanguine temperaments. Look at a virtuous woman – even when her virtue is of the commercial religious sort (virtue with a view to a hundredfold recompense in heaven) – and a world-weary old rake of forty. While Valmont of *Dangerous Liaisons* isn't quite there yet, M. de Tourvel is happier than him right throughout the novel; and if the clever author had been cleverer still, that would have been the moral of his ingenious work.

§ This is the melancholy disposition, which we may call love's disposition. I have seen the most distinguished women, the most ready to love, through sheer dullness choose to love a prosaic cheerful type. See the story of Alfred, Grande Chartreuse, 1810.

I know of no idea that tempts me more to keep what is known as low company.

(Here poor Visconti gets rather lost in foggy ramblings.)

All women are the same when it comes to fundamental emotional impulses and passions; the *forms* of their passions differ. There is the difference made by greater wealth, a more cultivated mind, a habit of elevated thinking and above all – unfortunately – a more delicate sense of pride.

The kind of speech that annoys a princess will not in the least shock an Alpine shepherdess. But once moved to anger, the princess and the shepherdess are equally impassioned. – The Editor's only note.

8. With sensitive women who are inexperienced in love, modesty is an obstacle to a relaxed manner, which leaves them open to being led by lady friends unhampered by the same innocence.* Instead of relying blindly on the usual patterns, they assess each situation individually. Their delicate modesty lends some restraint to their actions, and quite naturally, they contrive to appear unnatural – but this sweet awkwardness evokes a heavenly kind of grace.

If occasionally their informality seems to veer towards tenderness, that is because these angelic darlings tend to flirt without knowing it. Instead of troubling to interrupt their day-dreams, to avoid the bother of speaking and finding something amiable and polite – and no more than polite – to say to a friend, they resort to leaning gently on his arm.[†]

9. This means that women who turn author rarely achieve sublimity. However, their shortest missives can be very graceful, due to their avoidance of complete candour: to be candid would be for them like leaving the house hatless. Nothing is more usual for a man than to write completely at the dictates of his imagination, without knowing where he is headed.

Summary

The common error is to behave with women as if they were a more generous and more volatile kind of man, and most importantly one who cannot be your rival. We forget too easily that there are two new and particular laws that terrorise these mercurial creatures and counteract all human nature's normal inclinations, by which I mean:

Feminine pride, and modesty and the often indecipherable habits attendant on modesty.

* As M[étilde] said.

† Vol[terra], Guarna[cci].

Chapter XXVII

On Glances

These are virtuous flirtation's great weapon. Everything can be said with the eyes, and yet you can always deny a glance, for it cannot be quoted word for word.

This reminds me of Count G—, the Mirabeau of Rome. The charming little government in that part of the world taught him a new technique for communicating events: using lines all chopped up and switched round, at once making sense and nonsense. He is always understood, yet anyone who wishes may relay his exact terms on paper and still find no way to compromise him. Cardinal Lante told him he had stolen this skill from women; I would say even the most honourable of them is a master at it. This mischief is a cruel albeit deserved retaliation against the tyranny of men.

Chapter XXVIII

On Feminine Pride

All their lives, women hear men talking about supposedly important topics such as large financial gains, winning wars, other men killed in duels, appalling or admirable revenges, etc. Being unable to take part in these occupations, the more spirited women realise that the relative inconsequence of their own concerns bars them from feeling such ennobled pride. They feel a heart beating in their breasts that, by the strength and nobility of its rhythm, shows itself superior to all around them, and yet they see the least of men esteemed more highly than themselves. Women realise that they may only be proud in little matters, or at least in things whose importance is only a question of sentiment and which third parties cannot judge. Tormented by the distressing contrast between their marginal position and their soul's ambition, they attempt to make their

pride significant through the intensity of its expression, or through the implacable self-control by which they keep its laws. On seeing their lover, before becoming intimate, such women think they are like remote towers for him to besiege. They are irritated by his approaches, though he can do no better than show his love, since he *is* in love. Instead of enjoying the tender compliments of their preferred gentleman, they puff themselves up with vanity about him. When finally she does fall in love and lose her self-obsession, like any vulgar flirt, even the most passionate woman will have nothing left but vanity.

A generous woman will sacrifice her life a thousand times over for her lover – but would leave him forever in a fit of injured pride to do with a door left open or, perhaps, closed. It is a point of honour. Indeed, Napoleon fell because he would not relinquish a village.

I have known such fallings-out to last more than a year. One highly distinguished lady was sacrificing all her happiness rather than allowing her lover to form the slightest doubt about her all-encompassing pride. Their reconciliation was simply down to luck and, on my friend's part, a moment's irresistible weakness when suddenly coming upon her lover, whom she had believed to be forty leagues distant yet discovered in a place where he could not have been expecting to see her. She could not hide her spontaneous impulse of joy; the lover melted even more than she and they fell into each other's embrace. I never saw such a flood of tears, simply from the unexpected sight of happiness. Tears are an extreme form of smiles.

The Duke of Argyle showed fine presence of mind when he avoided ruffling Queen Caroline's proud feminine spirit, on meeting her at Richmond.* The more high-minded the woman, the more terrifying these storms:

* *The Heart of Midlothian* [Walter Scott, 1818].

*As the blackest sky
Foretells the heaviest tempest.*

— Byron, *Don Juan*

Could it be that the more delightful a woman generally finds her lover's fine qualities, the worse her vengeance will be in those cruel moments when sympathy evaporates and he seems no better than other people? She is afraid of being regarded as ordinary herself.

It is some time since I read that tiresome book *Clarissa*.³² However, it seems to me that feminine pride is what stops Clarissa from accepting the hand of Lovelace and forces her to languish alone. Lovelace makes a grave error; yet since she did love him a little, she could have found it in her heart to pardon a crime that was, after all, caused by love.

In contrast, Monime appears a touching model of feminine delicacy. Who does not blush with pleasure on hearing a worthy actress pronounce:

*That fatal love which I had crush'd and conquer'd, [...]
Your wiles detected, and I cannot now
Disown what I confess'd; you cannot raze
Its memory; the shame of that avowal,
To which you forced me, will abide for ever
Present before my mind, and I should think
That you were always of my faith uncertain.
The grave itself to me were less abhorrent
Than marriage bed shared with a spouse who took
Cruel advantage of my simple trust,
And to destroy my peace for ever, fann'd
A flame that fired my cheek for other love
Than his.*

— Racine, *Mithridate*³³

I imagine future generations will respond: so that's what the monarchy* is good for – to produce such characters as subjects for great art.

However, even medieval republics seem to offer worthy examples of this delicacy, which would undermine my thesis of the influence of governments on passions, but which I shall outline honestly nevertheless.

It is here in these moving lines by Dante:

“Deh! quando tu sarai tornato al mondo,

Ricordati di me, che son la Pia:

Siena mi fé: disfecemi Maremma;

Salsi colui, che innanellata pria

Disposando m’avea con la sua gemma.

– Dante, *Purgatorio*, canto V34

Desdemona's fate³⁵ befell this woman, who speaks here with such restraint. One word from her would have been enough to reveal her husband's crime to the friends she left behind on Earth.

Nello della Pietra won the hand of *Madonna Pia*, sole descendant of the Tolomei, the richest and noblest family in Sienna. Renowned throughout Tuscany, her beauty sowed such jealousy in her husband's heart that, embittered by false rumours and endless suspicions, he was driven to make a dreadful plan. It is hard to know these days whether his wife was absolutely innocent, but Dante implies she was.

Her husband brought her to the Maremma marshlands of Volterra, which were notorious then as today for the effects of their *aria cattiva*, or 'spoiled air'. He would never tell his unhappy wife the reason for her exile in such a dangerous place, while her pride prevented her from voicing either complaint

* Monarchy without constitution and without parliament.

or accusation. He lived alone with her in a deserted tower, whose sea-facing ruins I have visited; there he did not once break his contemptuous silence, replied to none of his young wife's questions, listened to none of her prayers. He waited icily with her for the foul air to have its effect. The marshland's vapours did not delay in withering those features, the loveliest, it was said, to be seen on Earth that century. In a few months she was dead. Some chroniclers of those long-ago times report that Nello used a dagger to hasten her end. She died indeed in the Maremma, in some horrible manner, but the exact cause of her death remained a mystery even to contemporary historians. Nello della Pietra lived on, spending the rest of his days in unbroken silence.

Nothing could be nobler or more delicate than the way Pia addresses Dante. She wishes to be remembered by the friends on Earth whom she left while still so young. Yet although she picks out and names her husband, she makes not the smallest murmur about his extraordinary and irreparable cruelty, indicating only that he knows the story of her death.

This bitter resolve in avenging pride is found almost exclusively, I believe, in southern regions.

In Piedmont, I happened to witness a rather similar incident, although at the time I did not know all the details. I was sent with twenty-five dragoons into the woods along the river Sesia, to root out smuggling. Arriving at evening in this wild, deserted region, I caught sight of an old, ruined castle between the trees. I set off for it; to my great astonishment, it was inhabited. I found there a provincial lord, of grim countenance, a man six feet tall and forty years old; he reluctantly allowed me two rooms. I made merry there with my sergeant, and after several days we discovered that our host was keeping a woman whom we light-heartedly named Camille. We were far from suspecting the terrible truth. She died in six weeks' time.

I had a morbid curiosity to see her in her coffin. I paid a monk who was standing vigil and, towards midnight, under pretext of coming to sprinkle holy water, I slipped into the chapel. There

I found one of those superb visages that remain beautiful even in death. She had a fine, aquiline nose whose noble and passionate form I shall never forget. I soon left that ill-fated place.

Five years later, a detachment from my regiment being required to accompany the Emperor to his coronation as King of Italy, the whole story was recounted to me. I learnt that the jealous husband, Count —, had one morning noticed, tangled in his wife's bedclothes, an English watch belonging to a young man from their small town. That very day he took her to the ruined castle, in the midst of the woods along the Sesia. Like Nello della Pietra, he would not say a word to her. If she made some plea, he would coldly and silently show her the English watch, which he kept with him at all times. He spent three years like this alone with her. In the end, she died of despair in the flower of her youth. Her husband attempted to administer a dagger-thrust to the watch's owner, missed, went on to Genoa, took a ship and was not heard of again. His property was divided among his heirs.

When dealing with women's pride, if you accept their accusations gracefully — which is the natural way for those formed by years of military life — you will bore these fierce souls. They will take you for a coward and their affront grow swiftly into lasting offence. These haughty characters yield with pleasure to men whom they see accept no slights from other men. This is, I think, the only line to take, so you must take care to argue regularly with your neighbour — and to win — in order to avoid such trials with your mistress.

One day Miss Cornel, a famous actress from London, was surprised to find a rich Colonel, who was often very useful to her, entering her rooms uninvited. He found her there with a casual lover, who was no more than pleasant company.

'M. X,' she said to the Colonel, her voice trembling, 'has come to see the pony I hope to sell.'

'I am here for quite another reason,' retorted the lover fiercely, who had begun to bore her but whose remark prompted a passionate revival of her love.*

These women share their lover's pride instead of exercising their own proud dispositions to his disadvantage.

The character of the Duke of Lauzun[†] – the Duke of 1660 – is highly attractive to such women and perhaps for all distinguished ladies, if they can first excuse him for his lack of grace. The finest breeding escapes them and they take for coolness the tranquillity of a gaze that sees everything but is disturbed by nothing. Did I not witness women from the court of Saint-Cloud insist that Napoleon's character was dry and prosaic?[‡] The great man is like an eagle: the higher he soars, the less visible he becomes, and he is punished for his elevation by profound solitude.

From feminine pride are born what women call *indelicacies*. I believe these are similar to what kings call treason, a crime that is all the more perilous since we may tumble into it

* I always return from visiting Miss Cornel full of admiration and deep thoughts on the passions seen for what they are. Her imperious way of ordering her servants about is not tyranny; she simply sees swiftly and clearly what needs to be done.

Angry with me at the start of my visit, she doesn't give that a thought by the end. She tells me all the ins and outs of her affair with Mortimer. 'I prefer to see him in company than be alone with him.' A cleverer woman could do no better, for she dares to be perfectly *natural*, untroubled by a single theory. 'I am happier as an actress than as the wife of a lord.'

A great heart, whom I must keep as a friend for my education.

† Nobility and courage in small things, but also passionate care for small things; the vehemence of a bilious temperament in his conduct towards Mme de Monaco (Saint-Simon, V, 383); his adventure under Mme de Montespan's bed while the king was in it with her. Without his care for small details, this character would remain invisible to women.

‡ 'When Minna Troïl heard a tale of woe or of romance, it was then her blood rushed to her cheeks, and shewed plainly how warm it beat notwithstanding the generally serious composed and retiring disposition which her countenance and demeanour seemed to exhibit.'

– *The Pirate*, I, 33 [Walter Scott, 1822].

Common people find figures like Minna Troïl cold, since they do not find ordinary situations worthy of their emotion.

unknowingly. The most sensitive lover can be accused of indelicacy if he is not very clever and, what is the great pity, if he dares to surrender to love's greatest charm, to the joy of being perfectly natural with his beloved and not to listen to the cautions of others.

These are things a well-born gentleman would never suspect. You must have lived through them in order to believe me, for we are used to behaving fairly and openly towards our fellow men.

You must never forget you are dealing with creatures who, rightly or wrongly, may believe themselves weaker-willed than us, or who think we believe them to be weaker.

A woman's true pride must surely reside in the vigour of the feelings she inspires. One of the queen's maids of honour (at the time of François I) was teased about her lover's lack of seriousness, for it was said that he scarcely loved her. Shortly afterwards, the lover fell ill and returned to court unable to speak. One day, since we were astonished that she still loved him two years later on, she commanded him to speak before us.

And he spoke.

Chapter XXIX **On Feminine Courage**

I tell thee, proud templar, that not in thy fiercest battles hadst thou displayed more of thy vaunted courage, than has been shewn by woman when called upon to suffer by affection or duty.

Ivanhoe, volume III

I recall finding the following sentence in a history book, 'All the men were losing their heads; at such times, women are unquestionably superior.'

Women have *reserves* of courage that their lovers lack. In the heat of danger, they are so carried away by the force of their

pride, so glad at last to challenge men, who have often belittled them with the ferocity of their protection, that this energy sweeps them far beyond the fears which just then are paralysing their former protectors. If a man discovered such emotional strength in battle, he too would show himself better than all around him, for the fear is not in the danger, it is in us.

I do not wish to devalue women's courage; I have seen some women, on occasion, outdo the bravest men. Yet they require a man to love. Then their feelings function only through him, so the most appalling imminent and personal danger becomes for them a rose to pluck in his presence.*

Among women who are not in love, I have also found the steeliest, coolest and most surprising audacity. Although I admit I thought they were only so brave because they had not known the agony of injury.

As for moral courage, so superior to the physical kind, the fortitude of a woman who resists her own love is simply the most admirable thing on earth. Every other kind of courage is trivial compared to something so unnatural and so painful. Perhaps they find their strength in the habitual sacrifices that modesty teaches them.

Unfortunately for women, evidence of their courage must always remain secret, and can scarcely even be spoken in private.

A greater misfortune is that it must always be used to spoil their happiness: the Princess of Cleves ought to have told her husband nothing and yielded to M. de Nemours.³⁷

Perhaps women feel that impregnable self-defence provides the best satisfaction to their pride, thinking it a point of vanity for their lover to have them. This is a sorry, pathetic notion: can you believe that a man who is deeply in love and who out of reckless affection throws himself into any number of ridiculous situations has the time to think of vanity? This is like the monks

* Mary Stuart speaking about Leicester, after her fatal interview with Elizabeth. (Schiller)³⁶

who believe they are giving the devil the slip, and as their reward take pride in submitting to their hair shirts and scourges.

I believe that if Mme de Clèves had reached old age, when we look back on life and the joys of pride are revealed in all their pettiness, she would have regretted her choice. She would want to have lived like Mme de Lafayette.*

I have just reread a hundred pages of this essay and find I have given a very poor impression of true love; love that can fill the soul alternately with the happiest and the darkest images, though they are always sublime and make the rest of the world recede to nothing. I do not know how to express myself well enough; I never felt my want of talent so keenly. How to show the simplicity of gesture and character, the profound earnestness, the gaze describing the nuance of a feeling so accurately and honestly, and above all, I say again, that miraculous unconcern for all that is not the woman we love? A *no* or a *yes* from a man in love is a balm that we find nowhere else, that indeed we did not detect in the same man at other times.

This morning (3rd August), I rode by the Marquis Zampieri's pretty English garden, which is situated on the lowest slopes of the great tree-crowned hills under which Bologna nestles and from which there is the most beautiful view of rich, verdant Lombardy, the loveliest land in the world. As I was following a path leading to the waterfall at Reno Casalecchio, overlooked by a grove of laurels in the Zampieri garden, I caught sight of Count Delfante. He was deep in contemplation, and although he and I had spent the evening before carousing until two, he barely returned my greeting. I went on towards the waterfall, crossed the River Reno and finally, at least three hours later, returning in

* We know quite well that this famous lady probably co-wrote the novel *The Princess of Cleves* with M. de la Rochefoucauld, and that the two authors spent the last twenty years of their lives together in perfect friendship. That is the picture of love in the Italian style.

the shade of the Zampieri laurels, I saw him again. He was in exactly the same position, leaning against a great pine-tree whose crest rose high above the grove. I fear this little detail will be judged too small and unrevealing: he approached me with tears in his eyes, begging me to tell no one of his apparent idleness. I was moved and offered to turn back again and spend the rest of the day in the countryside with him. Two hours later he had told me everything. A sweet-natured man, but how restrained these last few pages seem after what he told me!

In the second place, he believed his love to be *unrequited*; I do not agree. Nothing can be read in the beautiful inscrutable face of Countess Ghigi, at whose house we had spent the evening. Only occasionally a sudden faint rosiness that she could not suppress would betray the emotions of this lady in whose heart a woman's pride was battling with high passion. We also saw her alabaster neck grow pink as well as the visible parts of her lovely shoulders, worthy of Canova. She is expert at keeping her deep, black eyes from observing those whose answering gaze her woman's delicacy fears. But that night, Delfante said something of which she disapproved and she blushed, suddenly, from head to toe. That haughty female believed him unworthy of her.

All considered, even if I am wrong in my assessment of Delfante's happiness, I am pretty sure he is happier than I, who am not in love, though I am nevertheless, in both appearance and reality, rather fortunate.

Bologna, 3rd August 1818

Chapter XXX **A Strange and Sorry Spectacle**

With their feminine pride, women suffering the blandishments of fools take revenge on intelligent men, and they make passionate men suffer for the crassness of wealthy, prosaic bores. It must be said, this makes for a pretty scene.

Some women have been made miserable by the petty concerns of pride and worldly convention, indeed the pride of their own parents has left them in some terrible situations. In compensation for their misfortune, fate had marked them out for the joy of loving and being passionately loved, yet one fine day, here they are parading the same senseless pride learnt from their enemies and those whose first victims they were – aiming to destroy their only remaining pleasure and make them and those who love them unhappy too. A lady friend of mine who has had ten intrigues that we know of (not without some overlap) seriously convinces these women that if they are in love, they will be disgraced in the eyes of society. Yet this good society, which can never see beyond the basest notions, generously allows them a new lover every year, for it rules that this is the way of the world. So the heart sickens at this bizarre spectacle: following the advice of some coarse hussy, a sensitive and supremely delicate woman, an angel of purity, flees the only and wonderful happiness she is due, to appear in a gown of dazzling whiteness before some fat boor of a judge known to be blind for the last hundred years, who bellows at the top of his voice:

‘She is dressed in black!’

Chapter XXXI **Extract from Salviati’s Diaries**

*Ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit*³⁸
Propertius, *Elegies*, II, I

Bologna, 29th April 1818

Driven mad by the unhappiness to which love has reduced me, I curse my existence. I haven’t the heart to do anything. The skies weigh down heavily; it is raining. After a long winter nature was preparing for spring, but a late chill now re-envelops it in mourning.

Schiassetti, a colonel on half pay and a coolheaded, sensible friend, came by to spend a couple of hours with me:

'You should give up loving her.'

'How? If only I still had my fervour for military life.'

'It's a great misfortune that you ever met her.'

I almost agree, so beaten and helpless do I feel, so riddled with melancholy. We strove to divine why her friend might want to malign me to her, but nothing fitted apart from this old Neapolitan saying, 'A woman left behind by love and youth will take offence at a trifle.' What is sure is that a cruel woman is furious with me – that is the word her friend used. I could take some kind of horrible revenge, but I have not the slightest means of defence against her hatred.

Schiassetti has left. I go out in the rain not knowing what will become of me. My apartment, these rooms I dwelt in during the early days of our acquaintance when I used to see her every evening, are grown unbearable. Each engraving, each piece of furniture, reproaches me for the happiness I dreamed of in their presence, and which I have lost forever.

I wander through the streets in freezing rain. Chance, if I can call it that, sends me under her window. Night was falling and I walked along, looking up through my tears at her bedroom window. Suddenly, the curtains opened slightly as if for someone to look out onto the square, then closed again straight away. I felt something physically move inside my chest. I could stand there no longer – I take refuge in the porch of the neighbouring house. A thousand feelings flood my heart: chance caused that movement of the curtain, but what if it were her hand that parted it!

There are two great afflictions in the world: frustrated passion and the dead blank.³⁹

For my love, I sense that only two steps away there lies immense happiness, beyond all my dreams, and it depends on a single word, on one smile.

Without a passion like Schiassetti's, on bleak days I cannot see happiness anywhere, I begin even to doubt that I am meant for any happiness and sink into melancholy. It would be better to be without

strong feelings and to make do with only a mild curiosity or hint of vanity.

It is two in the morning. I saw that brief movement of the curtain at six o'clock. I have visited two acquaintances, seen something at the theatre, but everywhere been silent and dreamy. I spent the whole evening turning the following question round and round, 'After such ill-founded anger – for indeed I did not mean to offend her, and is there anything in the world that the right intention cannot excuse? – did she feel even the briefest impulse of love?'

Poor Salviati, who wrote the preceding pages in the margins of his Petrarch, died some time later. He was an intimate friend of both Schiassetti and me; we knew all his thoughts and he is responsible for all the gloomy parts of this essay. He was imprudence incarnate. As for the woman for whom he committed such follies, she is the most interesting creature I have ever come across. Schiassetti asked me:

'Do you really believe that this unlucky passion was entirely without benefit for Salviati?'

First, he was then undergoing the most painful financial hardship you can imagine. This ill luck considerably reduced his fortune, and after a youth of dazzling freedom this would have enraged him in any other circumstances. As it fell out, he scarcely remembered to think of it once a fortnight.

Then, and equally importantly for a man of his inclinations, this passion was his first ever lesson in logic. This might appear odd for a man who has been at court, but coupled with his inordinate courage it does make sense. For example, he scarcely winced that day in 18–, when all his hopes were dashed to nothing. He was even surprised, as before in Russia, not to have any particular emotional reaction. It is well known that he has never been sufficiently afraid of anything to dwell on it two days running. In place of his old insouciance, he now sought every possible means to show his courage, for until that moment he had not known danger.

When, as a result of his imprudence and his foolish confidence in positive interpretations,* he found himself condemned to seeing the woman he loved only twice a month, we occasionally found him drunk with joy, talking of her for whole evenings at a time, simply because she had received him with exactly that noble openness he so adored. He insisted that Mme – and he had matchless souls and understood each other perfectly with a single glance. He could not understand why she listened to the petty bourgeois interpretations that seemed to incriminate him. The outcome of this beautiful confidence in a woman surrounded by his enemies was that her door was soon shut in his face.

‘With Mme –,’ I said to him, ‘you forget all your wise resolutions. You know you should only put your faith in a person’s generous heart as a very last resort.’

‘Do you think,’ he replied, ‘that the world contains another heart so well matched with hers as mine? Yes, it is true. My being so desperately in love that I can see Léonore’s angry profile in the silhouette of the rocks at Poligny exacts a heavy toll: the misfortunes that dog all my undertakings in the real world, misfortunes springing from my impatience with cautious cultivation and from mistakes made in the heat of the moment.’

So we see the degrees of folly.

Salviati’s life was now divided into fortnightly periods, each taking on the tone of the last interview he had been permitted with *her*. But several times I noticed that his joy at being welcomed a little less coolly on one occasion was markedly less intense than his despair at a particularly stern reception on another.[†] And sometimes, it seemed Mme – was not entirely open with him. These are the only two objections regarding the relation that I have ever dared express to him. Leaving aside the

* *Sotto l’usbergo del sentirsi puro.*⁴⁰

† With love, I often find we are more inclined to be made deeply unhappy by misfortune than we are to find happiness in good fortune.

deepest well of his pain, which he was sensitive enough never to discuss even with his dearest and most disinterested friends, for him a stern reception from Léonore appeared to confirm the triumph of cunning, prosaic men over the frank and generous kind. At these moments, he lost faith in virtue and, above all, in glory. With his friends, he would discuss only the unhappy conclusions whose truth his passion forced on him and which might, besides, be of some interest to philosophy. I was interested in the workings of this strange mind, since usually passionate love occurs in people who are of the Teutonic type and a little simple.* Salviati, on the contrary, was among the most decisive and agile minds I ever knew.

I thought I detected that, after these chilly visits, he was not satisfied until he had managed to justify Léonore's severity. As long as he judged that she might be wrong to mistreat him, he was unhappy. I could never have imagined a love so untainted by vanity.

He would not stop eulogising love:

'If some supernatural being told me, "Break the glass in this watch and Léonore will be to you what she was three years ago, an ordinary friend," I truly believe I should never in my life have the courage to smash it.'

He appeared so distraught as he made this argument that I never gathered the courage to present my objections to him.

He added, 'Just as, at the end of the Middle Ages, Luther's reformation shook society to its foundations, renewed and rebuilt the world on rational principles, so a generous character is recast and revived by love.'

'Only then can a man can throw off the childish things in life; without that revolution, there will always be something stiff and theatrical about him. Only since being in love have I learned true nobility of character, so inadequate is our military education these days.'

* Don Carlos; Saint-Preux; Racine's characters Hippolyte and Bajazet.

‘Although I acquitted myself well enough then, I was just a child at Napoleon’s court and in Moscow. I did my duty, but I knew nothing of the heroic simplicity born of complete and wholehearted self-sacrifice. For example, only last year I came to understand the simplicity of Livy’s Romans. I used to find them heartless, compared to our dashing colonels. I now see that what they wanted for Rome is what I feel in my heart for Léonore. If I could have the good fortune to do something for her, my first thought would be how to conceal it. The conduct of a Regulus or a Decius was always pre-determined, so no situation could surprise them.⁴¹ I was nobody before I loved precisely because I had sometimes been tempted to think myself of some consequence. I was aware of my own efforts, and I approved.

‘As for the emotions, what do we not owe to love? After the hazards of early youth, the heart closes against sympathies. Death and absence distance us from our childhood friends, we are obliged to spend our lives with impersonal associates, yard-stick in hand, always weighing up issues of interest and vanity. Little by little, all a soul’s warmth and generosity dies away for lack of cultivation and, before he reaches thirty, a man will find himself as good as fossilised among all sweet, loving sensations. In the middle of this arid desert, love plumbs a spring of feelings that are fresher and more plentiful even than those of our first youth. Then, there were some vague, silly hopes, and endless distractions;[†] never unconditional devotion, no constant, deep desires. Always flighty, the soul thirsted after novelty and neglected today what it had adored the day before. And nothing is more contemplative, more mysterious or more eternally one with its object than the crystallisation of love. Before, only amusing things could please us, and then only for a moment; now, everything to do with our beloved, even quite inconsequential objects, affects us deeply.

† Mordaunt Merton, vol. I of *The Pirate* [Walter Scott, 1822].

‘Arriving in a large town, a hundred miles from Léonore, I found myself wracked with nerves: at each street corner, I trembled for fear of coming upon Mme Alviza, Mme –’s intimate friend (although she and I were not acquainted). Everything took on a mysterious, holy sheen; my heart beat as I spoke to an elderly scholar. I could not even hear talk of a house near the home of Léonore’s friend without blushing.

‘Even the severity of the woman we love bespeaks infinite graces, which is not the case in the company of the most delightful of other women. Thus, far from being, as most painters make them, sections of small attraction necessary to bring out the lighter parts and set faces in relief, the large shadowed areas in Correggio’s scenes have their own seductive charms and themselves inspire sweet reveries.*

‘Indeed, half – the most beautiful half – of life is hidden from him who has not loved passionately.’

Salviati required all the strength of his reasoning to stand up to wise Schiassetti, who continued to tell him:

‘If you want to be happy, be satisfied with a life free of troubles and a small quantity of joy every day. Stay away from the roulette of great passions.’

‘Then lend me some of your curiosity about life,’ responded Salviati.

I believe there were days when he would have liked to try following our wise colonel’s advice. He would struggle a bit, would think he was succeeding, but this goal was just beyond him – and yet what strength that soul had!

Some distance away in the street, the sight of a white satin hat quite similar to that of Mme – nearly gave him a heart attack and obliged him to lean against a wall. Even in his saddest times, the joy of seeing her always gave him a few hours of intoxication

* Since I have singled out Correggio, I will add that his sketch of an angel’s head, in the gallery at the Florence museum, shows the gaze of happy love, and in Parma, his Madonna crowned by Jesus shows love’s lowered eyes.

that overcame the effects of all the misfortunes and all the rationalising.[†] Besides, it is a fact that by the time he died,[‡] after two years of this generous and untrammelled passion, he had assumed a number of noble ways, and on this point at least he judged himself correctly. If he had lived and if circumstances had favoured him more, he would have gained some renown. Perhaps, too, due to the very strength of his simplicity, his merit would still have passed uncelebrated on this earth.

*† Come what sorrows can,
It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
That one short moment gives me in her sight.
— Romeo and Juliet, II.6*

‡ A few days before his death, he wrote a short ode which has the merit of expressing exactly the sentiments we were discussing.

L'ULTIMO DI
anacreontica

A ELVIRA

*Vedi tu dove il rio
Lembendo un mirto va,
Là del riposo mio
Le pietra surgerà.
Il passero amorose,
E il nobile usignuol,
Entro quell mirto ombroso
Raccoglieranno il vol.
Vieni, diletta Elvira,
A quella tomba vien,
E sulla muta lira,
Appoggia il bianco sen
Su quella bruna pietra,
Le tortore verran,
E intorno alla mia cetra,
Il nido intrecceran.
E ogni anno, il di che offendere
M'osasti tu infidel,*

*Faro lessù discendere
La folgore del ciel.
Odi d'un uom che muore
Odi l'estremo suon
Questo appassito fiore
Ti lascio, Elvira, in don.
Quanto prezioso ei sia
Saper tu il devi appien;
Il di che fosti mia,
Te l'involai dal sen.
Simbolo allor d'affetto,
Or pegno di dolor,
Torno a posarti in petto.
Quest' appassito fior.
E avrai nel cuor scolpito,
Se crudo il cor non è,
Come ti fu rapito,
Come fu reso a te.⁴²*

— S. Radael

O lasso!

Quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio,

Menò costui al doloroso passo!

Biondo era e bello, e di gentile aspetto:

*Ma l'un de' cigli un colpo avea diviso.**

— Dante, *Inferno*, V. 113–14 & *Purgatory*, III. 107–8

Chapter XXXII

On Intimacy

The greatest joy love can give is in the moment your beloved's hand clasps your own for the first time.

The pleasure of gallantry, on the contrary, is much more real, and more dependent on witty conversation.

In passionate love, intimacy is not perfect happiness in itself but the last step on our way to perfection.

But how to describe happiness, if it leaves no memories?

Mortimer returned shaking from a long journey. He adored Jenny but she had not replied to his letters. On reaching London, he jumps on his horse and goes in search of her at her country house. He arrives. She is walking in the park; he races to her, heart pounding. He meets her, she offers him her hand, greets him awkwardly: he sees that his love is returned. As they are strolling together along the park's avenues, Jenny's gown catches on a bush of spiny acacia. In the time that followed, Mortimer secured his happiness, but Jenny was unfaithful. I

* 'Poor unhappy soul! How many sweet thoughts and what loyal adoration led him to his final hour. His face was handsome and peaceful, his hair blond, only a noble scar crossed one of his eyebrows.'

† *Vie de Haydn* [*Life of Haydn*, Stendhal, 1814].

‡ 20th September 1811.

§ This is the critical type of agitation; with an intelligent man, it proves that he is passionately in love.

maintain that Jenny never did love him. He counters that the manner in which she received him on his return is certain proof of her love, but he could never give me the tiniest detail about it. Only he now trembles visibly whenever he sees an acacia bush. This truly is the single distinct memory he retains from the happiest moment of his life.[†]

This evening, a straightforward, sensitive gentleman, formerly a knight, confided in me the story of his love affairs (while we huddled in our storm-tossed craft during heavy weather on Lake Garda[‡]), which in my turn I shall not confide to the public. However, I believe his story confirms that the moment of intimacy is like those beautiful days in May, an ethereal time of the most delicate flowers; a moment, also, that can be fatal and may blight the fairest hopes in an instant.

The importance of naturalness cannot be overrated. It is the only kind of flirtation that is acceptable in the serious business that is Werther's⁴³ conception of love, in which you have no idea what lies ahead. At the same time – and luckily for virtue – it is also the best tactic. A man who is truly in love will say charming things without hesitation; he is fluent in a language he never learnt.

Unhappy the man who is the tiniest bit pretentious! Even when he is in love, even with the broadest reserves of intelligence imaginable, he will lose three-quarters of his advantages. If we give in to a moment's affectation, a minute later all our wit dries up.

It seems to me that the entire art of love comes down to saying exactly what the current moment's degree of intoxication requires; in other words, it is all about listening to your heart. Of course, that is easier said than done. When his lady-friend tells a man who is truly in love things that make him happy, he is likely to be struck speechless.

Thus he loses the mechanisms that should have led to words,[§] and it is better to stay quiet than to blurt out passionate

confessions at the wrong moment. What was just right ten seconds ago is no longer, and would be quite inappropriate now. Every time I forgot this rule* and said something rather tasteful that I had thought of three minutes earlier, Léonore was sure to take me to task. Afterwards, I would tell myself:

‘She is right, for these are terms that must be highly shocking to a delicate lady; it is an indiscretion of feeling. Like orators of indifferent taste, they would probably prefer a degree of weakness or coolness. A woman having nothing in the world to fear apart from her lover’s infidelity, the tiniest insincerity, even if it is the most innocent slip, will instantly banish all of her happiness and throw her into a state of doubt.’

Honest women shy away from vehemence and suddenness, although these are the characteristics of passion. Vehemence also unnerves modesty, and so they give it a wide berth.

When some impulse of jealousy or displeasure has sharpened your mind, you can usually set out to converse in such a way as to bring on that intoxication that smooths love’s path. And, if after two or three opening lines, you don’t miss the chance to voice precisely what your heart suggests, you will give exquisite pleasure to your beloved. Most men err in wanting to say something they find pretty, clever or moving, instead of releasing themselves from society’s constrictions, to attain that level of intimacy and naturalness in which they can innocently express what they feel that very second. If you are brave enough to be so natural, you will be rewarded straight away by some sweet reconciliation.

This reward of pleasure for your beloved, as immediate as it is involuntary, is what elevates this passion so far above all others.

* We note that if the author occasionally employs the pronoun ‘I’, it is in order to add some variety to the form of this essay. He has not the slightest intention of detaining his readers over a narrative of his own sentiments. He hopes to share his observations of other people with his readers in the most entertaining manner possible.

If both are perfectly at ease, the happiness of two individuals ends by melting into one.[†] Thanks to affinities and other laws of human nature, this is quite simply the greatest happiness we can wish for.

It is easy to define what we mean by this word '*naturalness*': it is the essential condition for happiness in love.

We call *natural* whatever does not actively avoid the usual way of doing things. It goes without saying that not only must you never lie to your beloved, you must not even slightly embellish or sully truth's purity. For if we embellish it, we will focus on the embellishing and no longer be able to respond innocently, like a piano key, to the feeling we read in her eyes. A certain coolness soon tells her you are distracted, and she in her turn resorts to flirtation. Is this not the underlying reason why we cannot bring ourselves to love a woman less intelligent than ourselves? For if she were, we could dissemble undetected, and since that is the easier path, we would get used to doing without naturalness. Henceforth love would no longer be *love*, it would revert to an ordinary commercial relationship, the only difference being that instead of money we earn pleasure or vanity, or a combination of these. But it is hard not to feel a hint of contempt for a woman who cannot see through your play-acting; all you need is to meet a lady cleverer in this respect and you will leave the first without ceremony. Habit or pleading might hold you back, but I'm speaking of the heart's inclination, and its first instinct is to fly towards the greatest pleasure.

To come back to this word *naturalness*, natural and habitual are two separate things. If you take them to mean the same thing, it is clear that the more sensitive you are the harder it will be to act *naturally*, for habit will guide you less and you will be put on the spot with each new situation. Any leaf from the life of a cold man is the same; take him today, yesterday, or any other, he is always the same dull block.

† By relying on exactly the same actions.

As soon as his heart is stirred, a sensitive man loses all notion of habits that might guide his actions; how then can he follow a path for which he has lost his affinity?

He feels the great weight attached to each word spoken to his beloved; it seems to him that one word will decide his fate. How could he not seek to express himself perfectly? He must at least have the feeling that he is speaking well. From here on, innocence is lost. Therefore, there is no point in claiming to be innocent, one of those who never analyses his actions. We are only what we can do, but we are aware of it.

Here we have reached the final stage of naturalness, to which the most sensitive, loving heart can aspire.

A man in love, like a traveller in a storm, can do no more than cling to his resolution never to alter the truth and always to listen to his heart. If the conversation is lively and full of interruptions, he may hope for a few fine, natural moments; otherwise he will only be perfectly natural at those times when his love is not quite so overwhelming.

When you are with your beloved, you can scarcely depend on *moving* naturally, despite the habits so deeply engrained in your muscles. When I used to give Léonore my arm, I always felt on the verge of toppling over and consciously had to remember how to walk elegantly. All we can do is avoid appearing artificial on purpose. Just be certain that artificiality is the greatest possible disadvantage and can easily become the source of the greatest misfortune. Your beloved's heart can no longer hear your own heart's pleas, and you lose that spontaneous impulse of openness responding to openness. You will lose all means of touching her – I almost said of seducing her. I do not mean to deny that a woman worthy of love might see her fate in the ivy's pretty motto: *who binds to nothing, dies*; that is a law of nature, yet it is always a decisive step for a woman to make the man she loves happy. It seems to me that a sensible woman need not permit everything to her lover until she can no longer hold back, and the merest doubt about your love's sincerity instantly

transfers a little more strength to her resistance, enough to delay your triumph by at least one more day.*

Need I add that to transform all this into the epitome of absurdity, we need only apply it to mannered love?

Chapter XXXIII

Always some small doubt to soothe – this is what gives energy to each moment; what shapes the trajectory of happy love. Since fear will never completely disappear, its pleasures will never fade. This happiness is characterised by extreme earnestness.

Chapter XXXIV

On Confiding

No arrogance is more swiftly punished than that which makes you confide the secret of an ardent passion to some close friend. If you are telling the truth, he knows that you are in the grip of pleasures a thousand times greater than his and you will be forced to look down on his petty amusements.

It is even worse among women, for the success of their lives depends on their inspiring a passion and, usually, their confidante will also have made their own amiability clear to the potential lover.

On the other hand, for the poor creature caught up in this fever, there is no need more pressing than that of a friend with whose help you can rationalise the terrible doubts plaguing you every second of the day. For, in this sublime passion, *something imagined always becomes something real*.

* *Haec autem ad acerbam rei memoriam, amara quadam dulcedine scribere visum est... ut cogutem nihil esse debere quod amplius mibi placeat in hac vita.*

– Petrarch, Preface by the Abbé Marsand.⁴⁴

Salviati wrote in 1817, 'A great defect in my character – and in this I am the opposite of Napoleon – is that when some thing has just been morally proven about a passion's pros and cons, I cannot manage to treat this proof as an established fact. In spite of myself, and to my great misfortune, I always call it into question again.' For it is easy to be courageous about your ambitions. When you are not in thrall to your desire for a coveted object, crystallisation can fortify your courage; in love, however, crystallisation is entirely beholden to the object you would conquer and against which you require that courage.

A woman's friend may turn out to be treacherous. She may also get bored.

Discontented and haunted by the need to act, to concoct intrigues, etc, a princess of thirty-five scorns her lover's luke-warmness, yet has little hope of finding another and, not knowing what to do with her agitation, indulges in fits of sombre thoughts. Yet she could find an activity and an aim in life – could in fact find pleasure – in souring a true passion, if there exist some passion impertinently directed towards another than herself, while her own lover dozes at her side.

This is the only occasion when *hatred* can lead to happiness, in this case, because it fosters distraction and occupation.

At first, as soon as word spreads in society, the pleasure of doing something, the *thrill* of succeeding at it, lends charm to this occupation. Jealousy of the friend is disguised as hatred for her lover; otherwise, how could you loathe a man you have never met? Great care is taken not to admit to envy, for that would mean first allowing that the rival has some merits, and our princess has partisans who flatter her by mocking the good friend.

All the while committing the blackest acts, our treacherous confidante can quite well believe herself solely motivated by the desire not to lose a precious friendship. The bored lady tells herself that even friendship may wither in a heart devoured by

love and its mortal cares. Next to love, friendship can offer only a sympathetic ear; and yet what could be more baneful nourishment to envy than these sweet confidences?

The only secrets between women that will be well received are those that adhere to the openness of the following argument:

'My dear friend, in this absurd, relentless war we wage with the prejudices launched against us by our oppressors, help me today. Tomorrow it will be my turn to help you.'*

This exception aside, there is also that of true friendship, begun in childhood and not spoilt since by an instant's jealousy.

The confidences of passionate love are only well received among schoolchildren in love with love and young girls enticed by curiosity and opportunities for tenderness, perhaps also already drawn by the instinct[†] that this is the great business of their lives, which they cannot embark on too soon.

Everyone has seen tiny three-year-old girls acquit themselves of the duties of gallantry perfectly well.

While passionate love is cooled by them, mannered love is fired up by confidences.

Leaving aside the dangers, there is also the innate difficulty of confiding. In passionate love, what we cannot explain (because language is too crude to convey these nuances) still troubles us, and since they are such subtle details we are more prone to errors of interpretation.

* *Memoirs of Mme d'Epina, Jéliotte*: 'Prague, Klagenfurt, throughout Moravia, etc. The women there are very witty and the men great hunters. Friendships between women are close. The country's best season is winter: the regional lords hold a series of two- and three-week-long hunting parties. One of the wittiest lords told me one day that Charles V had legitimately ruled all of Italy, and therefore there was no point in the Italians trying to revolt. This noble gentleman's wife was reading the letters of Mlle de Lespinasse.' – Znaym, 1816.

† Important question. It seems to me that aside from the education they begin at eight or ten months, there is indeed an element of instinct.

And a highly emotional observer observes badly; he tends to ignore the role of luck.

It might be wiser to be your own confidant. This evening, using false names but keeping all characteristic features, write down the conversation you have just had with your friend and what is troubling you. If you are passionately in love, within the week you will be a different man, and then on rereading your private consultation, you will be well equipped to give yourself some good advice.

Among men, as soon as there are more than two of you and the mood takes you, manners oblige you only to talk of physical love – especially at the tail-ends of dinners among men. You recite Baffo's sonnets,* a source of infinite delights, for each man takes his neighbour's rapturous eulogies as gospel truth when often he meant only to be polite or amusing. Petrarch's tender lyrics or French madrigals would be out of place.

Chapter XXXV

On Jealousy

Whether we are crammed in a gallery awaiting parliamentary speeches or galloping under fire to relieve a garrison, when we are in love, everything lends new zest to the perfections we attribute to our mistress, or inspires new ways – all excellent at first – of making her love us more.

Each imaginative advance is rewarded by a moment of delight. It is hardly surprising that such an existence should be attractive.

* Venetian dialect contains such lively descriptions of physical love that it quite outstrips Horace, Propertius, La Fontaine and all our poets. M. Buratti of Venice is at the moment the foremost satirical poet in our sad Europe. He excels particularly in the grotesque forms of his heroes, and is regularly thrown into prison. See his *Elefanteide*, *Uomo*, *Strefeide*.

The moment that jealousy materialises, the same attitude persists but with the opposite effect. Instead of giving you heavenly joy, each new perfection adorning the object of your love who, perhaps, loves another, sends a dagger to your heart. A voice whispers:

‘It is your rival who enjoys these delights.’[†]

And when they stop producing their first effect and showing you new ways of loving, the things that strike you instead seem new advantages for your rival.

You meet a pretty woman riding in the park[‡] – and remember that your rival is renowned for the fine stallions on which he can gallop ten miles in fifty minutes.

In this state, fury is soon born. All you can think of is that in love, *possession is nothing, enjoyment is all*. You exaggerate your rival’s happiness, exaggerate the insolence that won him his happiness, reach new depths of torment, which is to say you founder in a deep unhappiness that is further poisoned by the torturing remnants of hope.

The only remedy might be to observe your rival’s happiness very closely. You may see him dozing off peacefully in the drawing room alongside the woman whose very style of hat, when you chance on one similar glimpsed far off in the street, can stop your heart with emotion.

Should you want to rouse him, you have only to show your jealousy. You may be lucky enough to teach him the value of the woman who prefers him to you, making him indebted to you for the love he learns to feel.

When facing your rival, there is no middle way. You must either joke with him in the most offhand manner or make him afraid of you.

Jealousy being the greatest of evils, you may find that risking

[†] This is another of love’s follies: the perfection that you perceive is not one, for him.

[‡] Montagnola, 15th April 1819.

your life is a pleasant distraction. For at this stage, with all your dreams poisoned and your thoughts turned to the blackest (by the process outlined above), you may find yourself planning to kill this rival.

According to the rule that one must never lend strength to one's enemy, you should hide your love and under pretext of vanity – nothing to do with love – tell your rival in great secrecy, as politely and calmly as possible:

'Sir, I have no idea why society has ventured to give me young Miss –. They are even kind enough to think me in love with her. If you want her yourself, I would hand her over with all my heart, only unfortunately that would appear quite absurd on my part. In six months from now, you may take her as you wish, however today, since we are for some reason honour-bound in these matters, to my great regret I must tell you that if by some chance you cannot fairly wait your turn, one of us shall have to die.'

Your rival is probably the unemotional type, even a rather careful man who, once convinced of your resolve, will fall over himself to leave the woman in question to you, under the barest of pretexts. This is why you need to make your declaration perfectly cheerful, and keep the whole enterprise in deepest secrecy.

The thing that makes the pain of jealousy so acute is that vanity can do nothing to abate it. However, by following the method just described, your vanity will receive some nourishment. If you have been reduced to despising your mere amiability, you can now judge yourself courageous.

If you prefer not to set such a tragic spin on your affairs, you must set off for somewhere forty leagues away and find a dancer to be your mistress, whose charms should appear to have caught your fancy on the way.

Assuming your rival possesses only a modicum of human sympathy, he will think you are over your passion.

Frequently the best plan is simply to wait without flinching for the rival to *wear out his usefulness* to your beloved, through his own foolishness. For, unless it is a great passion, nurtured

gradually from early youth, an intelligent woman will not love a fool for long.* In the case of a jealousy that follows intimacy, you need once again both apparent indifference and actual infidelity, for many women, offended by a man they still love, attach themselves to him of whom their lover seems to be jealous – and the game becomes reality.†

I have gone into detail here because these fits of jealousy often make us lose our heads. Good advice well noted in advance can help and, since the crucial thing is to appear calm, you would do well to take your tone from philosophy.

Since others control you by denying or making you hope for things made valuable only by your passion, if you can convince yourself that you don't care a jot, suddenly your foes will find themselves unarmed.

If there is nothing to be done and you are able to amuse yourself with a little light relief, you may enjoy settling down with *Othello*. It will make you doubt the most crystal-clear outward appearances. We linger with pleasure over these lines:

*Trifles light as air
Seem to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs from holy writ.*

– Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act III

I have found a fine sea view to be some comfort.

The morning, which had arisen calm and bright, gave a pleasant effect even to the waste moorland view which was seen from the castle on looking to the landward; and the glorious ocean, crisped with a thousand rippling waves of silver, extended on the other side, in awful yet complacent

* 'La Princesse de Tarente', a short story by Scarron.

† As happened in 'Le Curieux Impertinent', a story by Cervantes.

majesty, to the verge of the horizon. With such scenes of calm sublimity the human heart sympathises even in its most disturbed moods, and deeds of honour and virtue are inspired by their majestic influence.

— Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor*

I find this in Salviati's manuscript:

20th July 1818. — *Often, and unreasonably I believe, I see my whole life like that of an ambitious or dutiful citizen deployed to guard the stores during a great battle, or in some other post without danger or action. On reaching forty, I should regret having passed the age for love without experiencing some great passion. I would have the bitter vexation of realising too late that I had been stupid enough to let life go by without really living.*

Yesterday, I spent three hours with the woman I love and a rival, whom she would have me believe she likes. Of course, there were moments of bitterness as I observed her beautiful eyes fixed on him and, on leaving, an acute sense of the wreck of my hopes. And yet, so many new things, so many vital thoughts! Such rapid reasoning! And, despite my rival's evident happiness, with what delighted pride did I recognise my love's superiority to his! I thought to myself, 'Those cheeks would blanch with the basest fear at the very least of the sacrifices my love would cheerfully make — no, indeed, would make with pleasure. For example, I might put my hand into a hat and risk drawing one of two slips, one saying be loved by her, the other die this second. And I am so sure of my feeling that it doesn't at all prevent me from making lively contributions to the conversation.'

If someone had told me this story two years ago, I would have laughed at myself.

In the voyage to the source of the Missouri made by Captains Lewis and Clarke in 1806, I read on page 215:

The Ricara Indians are poor, but kind-hearted and generous; we lived for some time in three of their villages. Their women are more beautiful than those of all the other peoples we have encountered; also they are disinclined to keep their lovers in suspense. We had another proof of the truism that you have only to travel the world to realise that everything can be done differently. Among the Ricaras, it is a great cause for offence if a woman bestows her favours without the consent of her husband or brothers. But in all other situations, the brothers and husbands are quite glad of the opportunity to show their friends these small courtesies.

We had a Negro along with us, who caused a great sensation among these people, seeing a man of this colour for the first time in their lives. He soon became a favourite with the fair sex and we saw that, far from being jealous, their husbands were delighted when he patronised their homes. Further enhancing the experience, the interiors of their huts were so cramped that everything was visible.*

* An academy ought to be established in Philadelphia devoted solely to gathering materials for the study of savage man in his natural state; we cannot wait until these fascinating peoples are wiped out.

I know that such institutes exist in the new world but only, it seems, with the same old-world regulations as our European Societies. (Report and discussion on the Zodiac of Denderah, given at the Académie des Sciences de Paris, in 1821.) I believe that the Academy of Massachusetts has wisely charged a clergyman (M. Jarvis) with preparing a report on the savages' religion. The priest does not omit to reject conclusively and with great emphasis the work of an impious Frenchman called Volney. According to the priest, the savages have the most accurate and noble notions of divinity, etc. If he resided in England, such a report would attract a *preferment* of three or four hundred louis to the worthy scholar, as well as the protection of all the peers of the region. But in America? Besides, this ludicrous academy reminds me that our free Americans set the greatest store on having beautiful coats of arms painted onto the panels of their carriages, but they are frequently distressed to find that their coach-painters' inadequate educations have led them to make mistakes in their blazonry.

Chapter XXXVI

On Jealousy, Further

As for the woman you suspect of inconstancy, she is turning from you because you are not causing crystallisation, and you keep your place in her heart now only thanks to habit.

She is turning away because she is too sure of you. You have silenced her fears, and happy love's succession of tiny doubts is quieted too, so reawaken her anxieties and above all beware the debasement of protestations.

In the long time you have lived alongside her, you will no doubt have discovered which lady in her town or her set is the object of her greatest jealousy or worst fears. Begin to court this woman, but rather than making your flirtation known, keep it hidden and pursue it in earnest. Place your faith in hatred's determination to see and sniff out everything. The distinct estrangement from all women* that you have felt for some months now should make this easy. Remember that in your position you will spoil everything by showing you care, so keep visits to your beloved few and drink champagne in good company.

To measure how much your mistress loves you, apply the following points:

1. The greater the role played by physical pleasure in your love and in your first attraction to each other, the greater the risk of inconstancy and above all of infidelity. This pertains especially when crystallisation has been forged at age sixteen, in the flame of youth.

2. The loves of two people who are in love are almost never identical.[†] Passionate love has phases during which each lover in turn loves more than the other. Often the response to passionate love's overture is only gallantry or vanity, and often it is the

* We may compare the branch encrusted with diamonds to a bare, leafless log, and the contrast will sharpen our memories.

woman who is wildly in love. Whatever the nature of their love, as soon as one of the lovers becomes jealous, he requires that the other fulfil the conditions of passionate love. For his part, vanity provides all the outward signs of a man deeply in love.

Lastly, nothing exhausts mannered love so much as passionate love in one's *partner*.⁴⁵

Often an intelligent man paying court to a woman only manages to make her think of love, and soften her heart towards him. She welcomes the gentleman who makes such pleasurable company, and he begins to nurture hopes.

One fine day, this woman meets a man who makes her feel what the first merely described.

I do not know how a woman reacts to jealousy in the man she loves. In a lover who bores her, jealousy must inspire a sovereign disgust that could go as far as hatred if the object of the jealousy is more attractive than its subject, for the only jealousy we accept is aimed at those of whom we too could be jealous – or so said Mme de Coulanges.

If a woman's lover is jealous and has no right to be, her feminine pride – so difficult to recognise and handle – may be incensed. On the other hand, jealousy may gratify proud women for whom it is a new way to show their power.

Jealousy may please as one further proof of love. It can also offend the modesty of extremely fastidious women.

Jealousy may please by displaying a lover's bravery: *ferrum amant*.⁴⁶ Take note that we only love true bravery, not that steeliness exemplified by the Viscount Turenne, which may also signify a steely heart within.

One of the consequences of the crystallisation principle is that a woman should never say *yes* to a lover she has cheated if she means ever to make something of him.

† For example, Alfieri's love for that great English lady (Milady Ligonier), who also made love to her manservant, and used amusingly to sign herself *Penelope. Vita*, II.

It is so delightful to go on enjoying the perfect image we have formed of the lady who engages us, that right up until that fatal *yes*:

*Rather than die, we will search far and wide
Any kindly pretext to go on living, and suffering.*
— André Chénier

In France, everyone knows the story of Mlle de Sommery, who continued to deny her guilt although caught in flagrante by her lover, and when he exclaimed at her brazenness, she replied:

‘Ah! I can see you no longer love me, for you prefer to believe what you see rather than what I tell you.’

Reconciliation with an adored mistress who has been unfaithful to you means being determined to smash a crystallisation that instantly grows back again and again. The love must die, and your heart go through every harrowing stage of the agony of detachment. This is one of the most unhappy encounters between passion and life, for you should do your best only to be reconciled as friends.

Chapter XXXVII **Roxane**

As for women’s jealousy, remember that they are naturally mistrustful. They risk far more than we and sacrifice more to love, have far fewer distractions to attend to, and above all they have very little means of checking on their lover’s activities. A woman feels degraded by jealousy; appearing to chase after a man, she fears her lover’s mockery, especially of her most passionate feelings. She is inclined to cruel expedients, although she cannot legally assassinate her rival.

Jealousy among women must therefore constitute a more abominable evil, if possible, than among men. It is the greatest

degree of impotent rage and self-disgust* that the human heart can bear without breaking.

I know of no other remedy to this cruel pain than death to whoever inspires it or suffers it. We can see the work of a Frenchman's jealousy in the tale of Mme de Pompadour's *Jacques le Fataliste*.

La Rochefoucauld says, 'We are ashamed to admit we are jealous, yet it is a point of honour that we have been jealous and could be again.'[†] Women, poor things, dare not even admit that they have felt this awful agony, since it only brings them ridicule. Such an excruciating wound may never completely heal.

If cold reason could stand up to imagination's fire with even a hint of a chance of success, I would say to those poor distraught, *jealous women*:

'There is a great gulf between unfaithfulness in men and in you. With you, it is partly a *direct action*, partly a *sign*. Thanks to our military education, it signifies nothing in men. However, thanks to your modesty, in women it is the most unmistakable sign of devotion. Lazy habits even make unfaithfulness something of a requirement for men. Throughout our early youth, the example of those we called the *champions* at school led us to stake all our vanity, all proof of our worth, on the tally of our successes in this field. Your own education has the opposite effect.'

As for the value of these actions as *signs*, if in a fit of anger I upturn a table on my neighbour's toe, he will get a terrible pain in the toe, but these things can easily be resolved. If instead I set out to slap him, that is different.

* This self-disgust is one of the principal causes of suicide: people kill themselves to restore their sense of honour.

† Maxim 495. I have not given names each time, but readers will have noticed the thoughts of several other well-known writers. It is history that I am trying to write, and thoughts like these are facts.

The difference between the meanings of unfaithfulness for the two sexes is so great that a woman in love may pardon an infidelity. This is impossible for a man.

Here is an authoritative rule for distinguishing truly passionate love from that founded on '*pique*': for women, infidelity will practically destroy the one but will strengthen the other.

Spirited women hide their jealousy behind a show of pride. They spend long evenings in cold silence with the man they worship, in whose eyes they imagine themselves unlovely, fearing constantly to lose him. This must be one of the worst tortures and also one of the richest sources of unhappiness in love. To cure these women so worthy of our admiration, it falls to the man to make some odd, decisive gesture, and take particular care to seem as if nothing extraordinary is going on. For example, he could take his lady on some great journey, setting off the very next day.

Chapter XXXVIII **On 'Pique'***

Pique is an impulse of vanity. I don't wish my opponent to have the last word, and *I view that opponent himself as the judge of my worth*. I want to make an impression on him. This is why we take these situations well beyond reasonable limits.

In justification of your own excess, you sometimes even try to convince yourself that your competitor intends to make a fool of you.

Pique being a *disorder of honour*, it is much more common among monarchs, and is much rarer in lands where actions tend to be valued according to their usefulness, such as in the United States of America.

* I know that this word is not good French in this sense, but I can find no better replacement. In Italian the term is *puntiglio*, in English *pique*.

Every man, and Frenchmen more than any others, detests being made to seem a fool. However, the characteristic frivolity of the former French monarchy[†] used to prevent *pique* from making great inroads among them apart from in gallantry and in mannered love. Serious thunderclouds only used to gather out of *pique* in monarchies where, due to the climate, the people are given to gloom (Portugal, Piedmont).

French provincials form some bizarre concepts of what a gallant gentleman's concerns ought to be, and then they mount a vigil all their lives, watching for someone to put a foot wrong. Therefore the gentlemen cannot relax. They are always self-conscious and this obsession makes them ridiculous, even in love. Next to envy, this is what makes staying in small towns so unbearable, and this is what you must remind yourself as you admire the picturesque views of one or another of them. The noblest and most generous emotions are crippled by contact with the meanest products of civilisation. To complete their ghastliness, these small-town bourgeois speak only of the corruption that pervades our cities.[‡]

Pique does not occur in passionate love. Either it arises from feminine pride – 'If I let my lover mistreat me, he will despise me and no longer love me' – or it is pure, driven jealousy.

Jealousy desires the death of any object it fears. A man whose pride has merely been injured is not so extreme: he wants his enemy to live, especially in order to witness his own eventual triumph.

An offended man will be pained to see his opponent give up his rivalry, for the latter may have the temerity to go on

[†] Around 1778, a good three-quarters of the great French lords would have been liable to being taken into justice, in a country where the laws ought to have been enforced without distinction between high or low.

[‡] Since envy prompts them to spy on each other, when it comes to matters of love, there is altogether less true love in the provinces and more libertinism. Italy is better in this respect.

believing, 'If I'd continued to care about that woman, I would certainly have won her.'

When it comes to *pique*, the ultimate object becomes irrelevant; all we care about is being the victor. This is what we see among women in the opera: the much-vaunted passion, so all-consuming that our heroine would have thrown herself from a window, is quite forgotten once her rival is banished.

Love founded on *pique* will blow over in a moment, in contrast with passionate love. The adversary need only give some unmistakeable sign and admit that he has given up the fight. Yet I hesitate to propose this maxim since I have only one example and even that leaves room for doubt. Here is what happened; my readers may judge.

Doña Diana is a young lady of twenty-three and the daughter of one of the wealthiest and proudest bourgeois gentlemen of Seville. All agree that she is more than ordinarily beautiful, and all concede her abundant intelligence and even greater pride. She was, or seemed to be, passionately in love with a young officer whom her family rejected out of hand. The officer leaves for America with Morillo and the two write letters back and forth. One day, at Doña Diana's mother's home and in the midst of a fair-sized gathering, some fool announces the amiable young man's death. All eyes turn to her, who says only:

'What a shame, to die so young!'

That very day we had read an old play by Massinger which ended tragically, but in which the heroine receives news of her lover's death with just such apparent calmness. I saw her mother tremble despite her pride and hatred of the officer; the father left the room to hide his joy. In the middle of their reactions and all the dumbfounded guests sending black looks at the graceless messenger, only Doña Diana serenely continued her conversation as if nothing had happened. Her terrified mother had her maid watch her every night but it seemed that her composed bearing and mood were unchanged.

Two years later, a very handsome young man starts to court her. Once more and for the same reason – that the young suitor is not of equal nobility – Doña Diana's parents vehemently oppose the union. Yet the lady herself declares that she will marry him. Her pride is piqued by her father's refusal. The young man is forbidden from entering the house. Doña Diana is no longer taken to the country and almost banned from attending church; elaborate care is taken to deny her all possible means of meeting her lover. He visits her in disguise, conducting rare and secret meetings. She persists ever more stubbornly, refusing the most dazzling suitors, even a title and a large establishment at the court of Ferdinand VII. The unfortunate lovers and their heroic devotion are the talk of the town. At last, Doña Diana is about to come of age. She informs her father that she will make full use of her right to decide for herself. Forced into a corner, the family begins the marriage negotiations. Halfway through the process, at an official meeting of the two families and after six years of unswerving devotion, the young man refuses Doña Diana.*

Fifteen minutes later, he was gone for good. She was comforted – was her love due to pique? Or was this a superior soul who would not make a spectacle of her grief before the world?

Often, I am convinced, passionate love will not turn out happily without the intervention of a certain *pique* to the lover's self-esteem. Thus a man seems to gain all he could wish for and his complaints appear ridiculous and unjustified. He cannot confide his unhappiness to anyone, yet he constantly prods and worries at it; if I may put it like this, the evidence for his misery is tangled up with the most flattering and deceptively loving signs from his lady. The hideous mask of his unhappiness will loom suddenly at the most passionate moments, as if

* 'Every year there are several instances of women being abandoned in this base fashion, so I excuse decent women their mistrustfulness.' – Mirabeau, *Letters to Sophie*. Public opinion holds no sway in these despotic countries: nothing can help but being friends with the Pasha.

simultaneously to defy him and to make him feel both the joy of being loved by the charming, oblivious creature in his arms and that this joy will come to nothing. Next to jealousy, this might count as the cruellest of miseries.

In one large town,* the people still recall how a gentle, affectionate man was led by just such a fury to kill his mistress, whom he only loved out of pique towards her sister. He invited her one evening to come out on the sea with him alone, in a pretty rowboat that he himself had prepared. Once out on the high sea, he pressed a spring, and the boat split open and sank without a trace.

I have seen a man of sixty set out to maintain the most capricious, madcap, delightful and dazzling star of the London theatre, Miss Cornel.

‘And do you imagine she is faithful to you?’ he is asked, regularly.

‘Not for all the world. I care only that she should love me, and that desperately.’

She was in love with him for a whole year, often to the point of distraction, and she lasted as long as three months in a row without giving him any cause for complaint. However, many reported very bad blood between his mistress and his daughter.

Pique will triumph in mannered love, for it determines the fate of such affairs. This is how you can best distinguish mannered from passionate love. This is an old wartime saying that we repeat to young recruits when they join a regiment: if you are billeted in a house where there are two sisters and fancy your chances with one of them, you must flirt with the other. With most young and willing Spanish women, if you want to be loved, you need only make plain, openly and with modesty, that you are not in the least attracted by the mistress of the house. It was good General Lasalle who taught me this valuable maxim. It is also the most dangerous way of going about soliciting passionate love.

* Livorno, 1819.

Pique holds together some of the happiest marriages, apart from those that began with love. Many husbands ensure long years of a loving marriage simply by taking a little mistress two months after the wedding.[†] The habit of caring for only one man is established, and family bonds then make it unbreakable.

At court in the time of Louis XV, one great lady (Mme de Choiseul) was known to adore her husband,[‡] but that was most likely due to his keen interest in her sister, the Duchess of Gramont.

As soon as she shows a liking for another man, the most neglected of mistresses reawakens your heart, sending you into all the apparent throes of renewed passion.

An Italian's courage is a fit of anger; a German's is a moment's abandon, while a Spaniard's courage is a mark of pride. If a nation existed for whom courage were regularly stimulated by quarrels over pride between each company's soldiers and between each divisions' regiments, if the army were routed, there would be no common support to call on and nothing would stop the troops in their headlong flight! It would be hopeless to expect those vain deserters to anticipate the danger and attempt to rally and face it.

According to one of our most fascinating French philosophers:

Any account of a voyage among North American savages will be sure to describe the usual fate of prisoners of war, that is, not only to be burnt alive and eaten, but beforehand to be tied to a stake near a bonfire where for long hours they are tormented by the most refined and vicious trials fury can invent. You must read the tales of those travellers who have witnessed the appalling scenes of joyous cannibalism,

† See Amelia Opie's 'Confessions of a Peculiar Man'.

‡ See Mme du Deffand's *Letters*; also Lauzun's *Memoirs*.

especially their descriptions of the women and children's wild frenzies and their horrific pleasure at vying with each other in acts of cruelty. You should read their further praise of their prisoner's heroic steadfastness and unmovable calm, not only in his refusal to show any sign of pain but also in defying his torturers with the haughtiest of spirits, the bitterest irony and the most insulting sarcasm, singing the glories of his own adventures, counting up his spectators' relatives and friends whom he has killed and listing the ways he has tortured them, accusing all about him of cowardice, pusillanimity, ignorance of efficient torture methods – until finally, collapsing in tatters and eaten alive with his eyes still open by enemies drunk on their own frenzy, he sighs his last oath and last breath together.* All this would be unthinkable among civilised nations, will seem a myth to our most intrepid captains of the grenadiers, and will one day be entirely discredited by posterity.†

This physiological phenomenon is caused by the prisoner's state of mind, in which he establishes himself on one side and his torturers on the other of a battle of wills, a fight to the death of vanity against vanity.

Our brave military surgeons have often observed that, even when calm in mind and body, those wounded who would normally scream horribly during certain operations instead show nothing but steadiness and dignity, if prepared for their ordeals in a certain way. The point is to stimulate their sense of pride, so you must repeat, first mildly then with irritating insistence, that they are in no state to undergo this operation without screaming.

* A person familiar with such spectacles who feels liable to become the hero of one should focus only on his own dignity. Then the occasion becomes the most intimate and immediate of passive pleasures.

† Volney, *Tableau des Etats-unis d'Amérique*, pp. 491–6.

Chapter XXXIX

On Love in Conflict

This type of love occurs in two ways:

1. The one who starts the quarrel is in love;
2. The one who starts it is not in love.

If one of the lovers seems more blessed with qualities they both esteem, the other's love will fade, for sooner or later fear of contempt will halt all crystallisation.

Nothing is more hateful to mediocre people than superior intelligence. This is the principal source of hatred in our times and, if we cannot blame it for some dreadful feuds, that is only because the people whom it forces apart are not obliged to live together. What would it mean for love if nature ruled us, and particularly if the gifts of superior men were not masked by social controls?

For passion to thrive, the inferior one must mistreat his *partner*, otherwise the latter will be unable even to close a window without giving offence.

As for the superior partner, he is happily deluded and not only is his love secure but almost all the minor flaws in his beloved can only make him cherish her more.

In terms of sheer lasting power, after passionate love between well-matched lovers, we must give a close second place to *love in conflict*, in which the instigator of the quarrel is not in love. There are examples of this in the stories involving the Duchess de Berry (*Mémoires de Duclos*).

Since the calculating ways of these lovers originate in the prosaic, egotistical parts of the character and reliably accompany them to the grave, this devotion can outlast even passionate love. But it is no longer truly love; it is a habit brought about by love, which retains only the memories and the physical satisfactions of that passion. The habit's persistence depends on less-than-noble protagonists. It makes for a little drama every day – 'Will he scold me?' – which busies the imagination, just as in passionate

love when each day we want some new proof of affection. See the stories about Mme d'Houdetot and Saint-Lambert.*

Sometimes, our pride refuses to grow accustomed to this kind of concern. In these cases, after several stormy months, pride will smother what love remains. But the noble passion may resist a long time before expiring. For one who is still in love, his ongoing mistreatment may persistently appear to be nothing more than the apparently minor tiffs of happy love. A few sensitive efforts at patching up can make the transition more bearable. On the pretext of some private affliction, some financial difficulty perhaps, you can forgive someone whom you have loved sincerely. In the end, you get used to living with your differences. Or indeed, besides passionate love, gambling or the pursuit of power,[†] might you find some other regular occupation, to equal love's excitement? If the initiator of the conflict were to die, the surviving victim would be inconsolable. This principle is what holds together a fair number of bourgeois marriages: the one who is scolded has to listen all day to their favourite topic.

Watch out for a false version of love in conflict. For example, I borrowed the following for my Chapter XXXIII from the letter of a highly intelligent woman:

'Always some small doubt to soothe – this is what gives energy to each moment; what shapes the trajectory of happy love. Since fear will never completely disappear, its pleasures will never fade.'

Among surly or badly brought-up people, or those who are naturally violent, that little doubt to soothe, that mild fear, are all dealt with by quarrelling.

* Mme d'Epinay's *Memoirs*, I believe, or Marmontel's.

† Whatever certain hypocritical politicians claim, power is the greatest of our pleasures. It seems to me love alone can beat it, and love is a delightful sickness that we cannot procure on demand, whatever brief we hold in the cabinet.

Unless the beloved lady has profited from a meticulous education and so possesses the resulting finely tuned sensibility, she may find more liveliness and therefore more charms in a love of this kind. Even if she is highly sensitive, she may find her *fiery* lover – the first victim of his own rages – so touching that she only loves him more. Lord Mortimer's principal complaint about his mistress was the candlesticks she would throw at his head. Indeed, if pride will forgive and permit such feelings, we must allow that they make a formidable defence against boredom, that great enemy of happy people.

Saint-Simon, France's only true historian, says:

After many brief affairs, the Duchess of Berry fell properly in love with Rion, young scion of the house of Aydie and son of Mme de Biron's sister. He was neither handsome nor intelligent, had a good many pimples and in fact altogether bore quite a resemblance to a boil. He had good teeth and not the slightest thought of kindling a passion which in next to no time became a headlong and enduring obsession, although it made no difference to the Duchess's ongoing other affairs and fancies. He had not the least gallantry, although his many brothers and sisters had plenty between them. Mme the Duchess's chambermaid, Mme de Pons, and her husband were of the same family and region as the boy (now lieutenant in the dragoons), and they had taken him in, hoping to make something of him. Hardly had he arrived, however, but he caught the Duchess's eye and was made Master of Luxembourg.

Though greatly amused in private, the boy's great-uncle M. de Lauzun was publicly quite delighted and saw his own youth in Luxembourg in the boy, as it was in the halcyon days with his own Mademoiselle. Lauzun offered counsel, and Rion, who was gentle and naturally polite and respectful, a good and honest boy, listened. Soon, however, he began to feel the power of his charm, which was spellbinding only

to the unaccountable fancies of this princess. He won the goodwill of all around him without trading on his newfound influence, yet he treated the duchess just as M. de Lauzun had treated his Mademoiselle. Soon he was wearing the finest lace, the richest clothes; furnished with money, silver buckles, jewels and more, he enchanted everyone, delighted in making the princess jealous and pretending to be jealous himself, even in making her cry quite regularly. Little by little he made it so that she would do nothing without his permission, not even the most ordinary tasks. No sooner was she dressed to go to the opera but he made her stay in; he forced her to be kind to ladies whom she envied or detested, and ungracious to people she liked and of whom he claimed to be jealous. She had not the slightest freedom, even on questions of clothing: he would amuse himself by having her unpin her hair or change her clothes when she had just got ready, and this so frequently and sometimes so publicly that she became used to taking his orders on her dress and daily appointments the day before. Then on the day he would change everything once more and the princess would be in tears again. In the end, she took to sending him messages with her trusted footmen – for he would take lodgings in Luxembourg as soon as he got there – and the messages continued throughout her toilette, asking which ribbons she should choose, the same for her gown and other ornaments, and almost always he would have her wear the opposite of what she wanted. If occasionally she dared to allow herself the slightest thing without permission, he would treat her like a servant and her tears would not stop for several days.

This haughty princess, who had used so to delight in the display and exercise of her exorbitant pride, now debased herself to preparing obscure dinners for Rion's various disreputable gatherings – she with whom no one used to dine who was not a prince of blood royal. The Jesuit Riglet, whom she had known as a child and who had kept up their

acquaintance, would join these private parties without any shame or embarrassment on the part of the Duchess. Mme de Mouchy was aware of all these strange goings-on – indeed it was she and Rion who chose the dates and invited the guests, and she who ultimately reconciled the lovers. All this was known throughout Luxembourg, where all were answerable to Rion. For his part, he took care to behave graciously to all, displaying a respectful manner in all his public encounters with the sole exception of his princess. He would give her such brusque replies in front of everyone that those present would look away and the Duchess would blush, for she never hid her passionate devotion to him.

For the Duchess, Rion was a sovereign antidote to boredom.

A famous woman once exclaimed to General Bonaparte, who was then a young hero covered with glory and untainted by crimes against freedom:

‘General, a woman could only ever be either your wife or your sister.’

The hero misunderstood the compliment, and so attracted some fine insults. That kind of woman likes to be despised by her lover; she only loves him when he is cruel.

Chapter XXXIX, Part Two

Cures for Love

The lovers’ suicide leap at Leucade⁴⁷ was a fine image in antiquity. Indeed, there is scarcely any true cure for love. Not only do you need some urgent danger to call a man’s mind back to the task of staying alive* but, even more difficult, you need a pressing, ongoing danger that demands attention while the

* As in the danger faced by Henry Morton, in the Clyde. *Old Mortality*, volume IV, p. 224 [Walter Scott, 1816].

habit of caring about himself can be re-established. In my opinion, nothing less than a fortnight's violent storm, as in *Don Juan*,* or M. Cochelet's shipwreck among the Moors⁴⁸ will do. Otherwise you quickly get used to the danger, and even in full view and twenty paces from the enemy, you go back to dreams of your beloved in which she appears lovelier than ever.

I cannot emphasise this enough: the love of a man who is head over heels either *delights in* or *trembles* at all that he imagines, and there is nothing in nature that does not remind him of *her*. Moreover, delighting and trembling are deeply absorbing business and everything else pales in comparison.

A friend who wishes to cure the invalid must at first be on the side of the beloved lady, yet every friend whose zeal is greater than his intelligence will end up doing the opposite. Which is to say that he mounts an attack against that cluster of dear illusions that we have previously called crystallisations,[†] with forces woefully inadequate for the battle.

The would-be saviour friend must recognise that if the lover is presented with some apparent absurdity, rather than renounce all that he cares for in life he will swallow the absurdity, hook, line and sinker, and marshal all his wits to deny his mistress's most obvious faults and unpardonable infidelities. In this way, passionate love will excuse anything, given half a chance.

If the lover is a cool-headed, rational type, he must only be exposed to his beloved's vices after several months of passion, for he will not accept them in the early days of his love.[‡]

Rather than trying crudely and openly to distract the lover, his friend must talk to him non-stop about both his love and

* By the over-praised Lord Byron.

† Solely for the sake of brevity and with apologies for the neologism.

‡ See Mme Dornal and Serigny, in Duclos's *Confessions of Count ****.

See also the note on Saint-Simon and *Werther*, chapter XIII; and the death of General Abdullah, at Bologna.

his mistress, while at the same time setting up a series of small events around him. A journey that *isolates* will not cure love,§ indeed nothing so reminds you of your beloved than new, contrasting surroundings. It was in the dazzling salons of Paris, among women famed as the most attractive in the country, that I most loved my poor mistress, alone and sorrowful in her cramped apartment in the depths of Romagna.||

I used to watch the clock in the gorgeous salon of my exile, waiting for the hour when she used to go out on foot, in the rain, to visit her friend. While doing my best to forget her, I noticed that contrasts stimulate memories which are less vivid but more heavenly than those we look for in old trysting places.

To turn her absence to best use, the saviour friend must be constantly at the lover's side, offering all possible angles on the outcomes of the affair. He should also do his best to make his disquisitions boring, lengthy or excessively discursive, giving them the same effect as commonplace homilies – for example, making the lover tender and sentimental after a dinner enlivened with good wines.

There are some moments with one's beloved that the imagination never tires of replaying and embellishing. This is what makes it so difficult to forget a woman with whom one has found happiness.

I will say nothing here about pride, a cruel but effective cure, not commonly part of a sensitive lover's armoury.

The early scenes in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* make an instructive sequence: the young man who sighs to himself, '*She bath forsworn to love*,' is a far cry from the ecstatic creature who cries, '*Come what sorrow can!*'.

§ I wept for almost the whole time (precious words of 10th June).

|| Salviati.

Chapter XXXIX, Part Three

Her passion will die like a lamp for want of what the flame should feed upon.

Lammermoor, II, p. 116

The saviour friend should take care to avoid bad arguments, for example talking about *ingratitude*. That would revive crystallisation, offering the lover a new victory and new pleasure in his love.

Besides, there cannot be ingratitude in love: the pleasure of the moment always seems to reward even the greatest sacrifices. The greatest mistake, in my opinion, is lack of honesty, for a lover ought simply to show his true feelings.

In the unlikely event that the saviour friend attacks love directly, the lover will reply:

‘Being in love, even against the wishes of your beloved, is no different (to lower myself to your shopkeeper’s talk) to having a ticket for a lottery whose prize is a thousand leagues beyond the mediocrity and trifling concerns your world can offer. You must be very vain, and with very narrow horizons indeed, if being well received in society can make you happy. With Léonore I discovered a world in which all was heavenly, delicate, generous. The most sublime, almost unimaginable virtue in your world was an everyday pleasure in our conversations. Leave me at least to dream of the happiness it would be to spend my life with such a creature. Although I understand that calumny has been my downfall and the end of my hopes, at least I can renounce my vengeance for her sake.’

There is almost no way to stop love’s blossoming once it is beyond the first moments. Apart from an abrupt, imperative voyage or the obligatory distractions of high society, as happened to Countess Kalenberg, there are several clever ruses at a saviour friend’s disposal. For example, he could let fall that, apart from the essential aspects of your contact, the woman you

love does not accord you the same degree of courtesy and esteem she used to show your rival. The tiniest things are enough, for in love everything is a *sign*. For example, she doesn't take your arm on the stairs to her apartment. By linking a humiliation to each judgment leading to crystallisation, exactly this kind of idiotic detail, blown up into a tragedy by one desperately in love, will poison love's wellspring and even destroy it.

A woman who is tormenting your friend can be accused of some embarrassing physical fault that would be impossible to verify. Even if the lover were to discover that the fault truly exists, his imagination would soon overlay it with new charms, and soon he would scarcely be able to see it. Only the imagination can counteract imagination's concoctions; Henri III knew that well enough when he spread defamatory rumours about the notorious Duchess of Montpensier.

Therefore it is a young girl's imagination that you must take most care of if you wish to keep her innocent of love. The less she knows of vulgarity, the nobler and more generous she will be at heart; in short, the worthier she is of our respect, the greater will be her peril. It is always perilous for a young lady to find her thoughts turning repeatedly and indulgently to the same person. If gratitude, admiration or curiosity chime in to strengthen her memories of him, she is almost certainly on the edge of the precipice. The greater her boredom with everyday duties, the more virulent those poisons we call gratitude, admiration and curiosity. At this point she requires the intervention of some swift, prompt and vigorous distraction.

Thus, if the medicine is administered early and in an unforced way, a little severity and *unconcern* are almost guaranteed to win the respect of an intelligent woman.

Notes

1. Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803) was an Italian dramatist and is often described as the founder of Italian tragedy. He was famed for his quick temper and ungovernable pride; also for his several affairs with aristocratic married women.

2. *Justine ou les Malheurs de la vertu* (1791) was the first published work of the Marquis de Sade. It tells the story of Justine, between the ages of twelve and twenty-six, in her attempt to make her way alone in France. She is repeatedly waylaid by apparently well-meaning men, including monks, nobles and judges, who rape and humiliate her.

3. Lisio Visconti, along with Salviati and Delfante, is one of Stendhal's masks in *On Love*.

4. Probably a character of Stendhal's own invention. See note 10.

5. The verse is a slight misquotation of some lines by Alexander Pope. Stendhal is alluding somewhat obliquely to M^{me}tilde, by referring to her cousin Bianca Milesi. Forli can probably be understood to represent Milan.

6. This recalls the grim delight taken by her contemporaries at the burial of Old Alice in Walter Scott's novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819).

7. *When of that smile we read,*

*The wished smile so rapturously kiss'd
By one so deep in love, that he, who ne'er
From me shall separate at once my lips
All trembling kiss'd.*

— *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, tr. Henry Francis Cary (London: George Newnes, 1903).

8. Léonore is a mask for M^{me}tilde, the object of Stendhal's affections at the time of writing. See introduction.

9. The setting of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

10. It is likely that these two figures stand in for Stendhal himself and an acquaintance, De Lisio representing Stendhal's commitment to the pre-eminence of passionate love.

11. Emilie is the beauty in Pierre Corneille's play *Cinna, or the Clemency of Augustus* (1639). Her unshakeable sense of honour is at the root of her lover's attempt at regicide and the anguish of many other characters. The play is set in ancient Rome, although it dramatises the tensions at the court of Louis XIV.

12. Claude Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) was a utopian socialist thinker whose teachings advocated, among other things, the equality of men and women and the 'rehabilitation of the flesh', or renewed appreciation of physical sensations and desires.

13. *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) was the novel that shot its author, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, to fame. An epistolary bildungsroman, it is the story of the young artist Werther and his hopeless love for Lotte, a simple girl whom he first sees taking care of her younger siblings.

14. Stendhal refers to M tild 's first cousin Francesca Traversi, who turned M tild  against him – perhaps due to a virulent dislike of the French. According to Stendhal, even before the incident at Volterra she had been poisoning M tild 's thoughts, painting Stendhal as a vulgar lothario and untrustworthy cad.

15. 'No greater grief than to remember days
Of joy, when misery is at hand.' (tr. Cary)

16. The mythical gardens of the witch Armida are the enchanted domain to which she takes the Christian hero Rinaldo, in the Renaissance poet Torquato Tasso's (1544–95) epic *Jerusalem Delivered*. Armida seduces Rinaldo in the garden's maze, but ultimately he is rescued, dragged from her clutches by two soldier comrades.

17. This is from Stendhal's own journal.

18. In English.

19. Lekain was the stage name of Henri Louis Cain (1728–78), a star of the French stage, noted among other things for his triumphs in performance in spite of his looks. His contemporary David Garrick (1717–79) was an English actor of similar standing.

20. Madame de Sta l (1766–1817) was a Swiss-born author who wrote in French. *Delphine* (1802), among her earlier works, describes a doomed affair between a woman and a married man.

21. Julien Louis Geoffroy (1743–1814) was a prominent theatre critic and literary editor, known for his scathing reviews.

22. Bottmer's memoirs never existed – they are another of Stendhal's inventions. He borrows the name of a chamberlain he knew in Brunswick in 1807 and attributes his own thoughts to this fictitious persona.

23. Alain Ren  LeSage, *L'Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (1715–35), tr. Tobias Smollett (1749).

24. Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis (95–46 BC), also called Cato the Younger, was a statesman in the late Roman Republic and a follower of the Stoic philosophy. He is remembered for his legendary stubbornness and tenacity as well as his immunity to bribes, moral integrity and distaste for the ubiquitous corruption of the period. His death was a popular subject in French revolutionary art and literature.

25. A reference to the quarrel between Paul-Louis Courier and Francesco Del Furia, a librarian in Florence's Laurenziana library. Accused of splattering ink over a manuscript while copying it, Courier responded by publishing as a pamphlet an open letter to a certain 'M. Renouard, librarian' (1810).

26. Stendhal had been profoundly hurt by M^{me}tilde's characterisation of him as a 'prosaic' man. He felt himself quite the opposite.

27. Stendhal refers to M^{me}tilde's treatment of him, as discussed in the Introduction to this volume.

28. Charles Angélique Fran^cois Huchet, Comte de la Bédoyère (1786–1815) was a General under Napoleon I. He died by military execution, aged twenty-nine.

29. Stendhal refers to the Milanese painter Andrea Appiani. He was free to make this unflattering comment since Appiani died in 1817.

30. Eponina was the wife of Julius Sabinus, a Romanised Gaul. When her rebel husband was forced to flee Roman reprisals (c. 70 AD), he faked his own death in a fire, then concealed himself in a cave. Such was Eponina's love for him that he shared with her the secret of his location, and she began a double life, visiting him in secrecy for several years and even bearing him two children.

31. Alongside the Marquise de Merteuil, Vicomte Valmont is one of the two central characters in Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's novel *Dangerous Liaisons* (1782). They vie with each other in games of sexual conquest and libertinage.

32. In Samuel Richardson's novel *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady* (1747–8), the wealthy heroine Clarissa Harlowe escapes an unwanted betrothal by running away with a sympathetic protector, Richard Lovelace. Lovelace soon betrays her trust, keeping her against her will in a brothel, trying to wear down her resistance to his own increasingly serious marriage proposals and eventually raping her.

33. From *The Dramatic Works of J. Racine: A metrical English version*, tr. R.B. Boswell (1889, etc).

34. 'Ah! When to the world shalt be return'd,
And rested after thy long road' so spoke
Next the third spirit, 'then remember me.
I once was Pia. Sienna gave me life;
Maremma took it from me. That he knows
Who me with jewel'd ring had first espoused.' (tr. Cary)

35. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, Desdemona is murdered by her husband, Othello, having been falsely accused of adultery.

36. Image taken from Friedrich Schiller's play based on the life of Mary I of Scotland, *Mary Stuart* (1800).

37. In Lafayette's novel, the naive, newly married Princess of Cleves and the dashing young Duke of Nemours fall in love but the Princess remains faithful to her husband. Suspecting her of infidelity, the latter forces her to confess her love and later to promise never to marry Nemours, even when free to do so. The Princess keeps her promise and eventually Nemours's love fades; the erstwhile lovers die apart.

38. 'The girl herself creates my genius.'

39. In English.

40. From Dante's *Inferno*: '[The boon companion, who] her strong breastplate / [Buckles] on him, that feels no guilt within.' (tr. Cary)

41. Titus Livius, or Livy (59 BC–17 AD) wrote a 142-volume history of Rome, *Ab Urbe Condita*, from the founding of the Empire up to the reign of Augustus in Livy's own time. Among those Romans whose heroic exploits he documented were Marcus Atilius Regulus, who fought against the Carthaginians, and Publius Decius Mus, who died fighting against the Latins.

42. 'The nest will be entwined

*And every year on the day
You dared betray me,
ob unfaithful one!
From the skies above
Bolts of lightning I will send.
Listen to this dying man
Listen to these final words
This withered flower
I leave to you, Elvira, as a gift.
For you must know full well*

How precious it is.

*The day you became mine
I stole it from your breast.
Once a symbol of love
Now a pledge of pain
I return to your breast
This withered flower
Your heart will forever remember
If it be not too cruel
How that which was taken away
Has now been returned.'*

(tr. Francesca Denley)

43. See note 13.

44. 'For the purpose of often dwelling on the sad remembrance of so severe a loss [...] I have thus prepared for myself a pleasure mingled with pain. My loss, ever present to my memory, will teach me that there is no longer any thing in this life which can afford me delight.' (tr. Alexander Fraser Tytler, 1810)

45. In English.

46. "'Tis the sword they love.' – Juvenal, *Satires*.

47. Ancient mythology dictated that a lover, in order to be cured of a broken heart, should jump from the Ionian island of Leucade into the sea. Those who survived were said to be restored to happiness.

48. In 1821, André Cochelet published an account of the wrecking of his brig the *Sophie* on the West African coast, which occurred in May 1819.

Biographical Note

Stendhal was born Henri-Marie Beyle in Grenoble in 1783. He had an unhappy childhood, disliking both his father and the strict Jesuit atmosphere of their household, and so moved to Paris at the first opportunity. There his relatives found him a position at the Ministry of War, and in 1800 he entered Napoleon's army. He served both in Italy and in the failed Russian campaign of 1812. After Napoleon's demise in 1814, Stendhal moved to Milan and it was here that he embarked upon his literary career.

He began publishing under the name Stendhal in 1817 with his travel book, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817*. This was better received in England than in his native France, and so he wrote a number of articles for British journals. By 1821 he was back in Paris and heavily involved with Countess Clémentine Curial who sent him some 215 letters during their two-year affair. This relationship was a contributing factor to his embarking on *De l'amour* [On Love]. This was followed by *Armance* (1827), his first novel, and one very coolly received by critics.

His most famous work, *Le Rouge et le Noir* [The Red and the Black], appeared in 1831. A complex novel, this explored French society of the early nineteenth century, with the 'red' symbolising the army, and the 'black' the church. His second masterpiece, *La Chartreuse de Parme* [The Charterhouse of Parma], was published in 1839, and was immediately praised by Balzac.

From 1841 Stendhal went on sick leave, and he died in March 1842, having suffered a fit in the street.

Stendhal and his work were regarded with some ambivalence by his contemporaries, but he has since come to be recognised as one of the originators of the modern novel, and is remembered today as a great figure of French literature.

Sophie Lewis is a writer and translator from French whose works include a translation of Marcel Aymé's 1941 novel *Beautiful Image* (2008). She writes for, among others, *The TLS*, *PN Review*, *The Jewish Chronicle*, *The Liberal* magazine and *The Spectator*. She also manages European operations for the American publisher Dalkey Archive Press. She lives in London.



Stendhal is remembered as one of the great figures of French literature. His own life of personal and moral freedom is reflected in his best-known novels *The Red and the Black* (1831) and *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839). A fervent admirer of Napoleon and a religious dissident, Stendhal was regarded with some ambivalence during his lifetime, but has since come to be regarded as one of the originators of the modern novel.

Author and Philosopher A.C. Grayling teaches Philosophy at Birkbeck College, and is a Fellow of St Anne's College, Oxford; his latest work is *The Choice of Hercules* (2008).


HESPERUS

Cover design: Fraser Muggeridge studio
Cover image: Photographer's Choice/Getty Images

On Love is Stendhal's extraordinary attempt to rationalise that most complex of emotions: romantic love. Inspired by an all-consuming unrequited passion, he brings together logical, clear-sighted analysis and fervent adoration, to remarkable effect.

Having classified the many types of love – passionate, physical, vain... – Stendhal identifies the seven stages by which lovers fall under the spell of emotion. He here expounds his celebrated theory of crystallisation, through which the object of affection is transformed beyond all recognition, adorned with a thousand crystals, in the mind of the lover. The prescience of his theories about the psychological state of loving has astounded generations of readers.

Yet beneath these clever philosophical musings can be seen a desperate attempt by the author to reconcile and dispel his own tortured emotions. The result is an astonishing work that bears all the hallmarks of Stendhal's later masterpieces.

£ 7.99

This is a gem of literature, one of many possible windows into the human soul, a book one must at some point read and meditate upon.

A.C. GRAYLING

ISBN 978-1-84391-608



9 781843 916093

www.hesperuspress.com



W7-CAX-001